

2 Peter Chapter 1

We will find in this second letter that Peter wrote a warning against false teachers. Peter wrote the letter probably somewhere between 67 and 68 A.D.

In verses 1-2, Peter identifies himself using the Aramaic “Sumeon” rather than the more familiar Greek Simon. He describes himself as “a servant” (Greek *doulos*, literally “slave”), and as “an apostle”, one sent with a commission.

2 Peter 1:1 "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ:"

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle”: Peter identifies himself with a balance of humility and dignity. As a servant, he was on equal basis with other Christians, an obedient slave of Jesus Christ. As an apostle, he was unique, divinely called, and commissioned as an eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ.

Simon was the name he had been known by, before he met and followed Jesus. The name Peter had been given him by Jesus. "Peter" means a rock. This is a general letter to Jew and Gentile who have accepted Jesus as their Savior. Peter was very aware of the great price the Lord Jesus paid to purchase his salvation.

Peter thought of himself as a slave, because Jesus bought and paid for him with His precious blood. "Apostle", as we have said before, means ambassador. Salvation is a gift from God and Peter makes that statement here, when he says "obtained like precious faith". We receive the righteousness of Christ, when we receive Jesus as our Savior.

“To them”: The recipients of this letter are the same as those who received Peter’s first letter (3:1; 1 Peter 1:1).

“Obtained” or received. An uncommon word often referring to obtaining something by lot (Acts 1:17). It can mean “attaining by divine will.” Here, Peter was emphasizing that salvation was not attained by personal effort, skill, or worthiness, but came purely from God’s grace.

“Faith”: Peter is speaking of a subjective faith, i.e., the Christian’s power to believe for his salvation. Faith is the capacity to believe (Eph. 2:8-9). Even though faith and belief express the human side of salvation, God still must grant that faith. God initiates faith when the Holy Spirit awakens the dead soul in response to hearing the Word of God. (Acts 11:21; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:2).

“Like precious faith”: Generally, the Greek word which is translated “of the same kind” was used to designate equal in rank, position, honor, standing, price, or value. It was used in the ancient world with strangers and foreigners who were given equal citizenship in a city. Here, Peter was emphasizing that Christians have all received the same priceless saving faith.

There are no first and second class Christians in spiritual, racial, or gender distinctions (Galatians 3:28). Since Peter was writing to mostly Gentiles, he may have been emphasizing that they have received the same faith as the Jews (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17-18).

“Through the righteousness”: Peter’s point is that believers share the equal gift of salvation because God’s righteousness is imputed to them. That righteousness recognizes no distinction between people except that the sins of some are more heinous than others. So, not only do they have faith because God gives it to them, they are saved only because God imputes righteousness to them (Rom. 3:26; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8-9).

“Of God and our Savior Jesus Christ”: The Greek construction has only one article before this phrase, making the entire phrase refer to the same person. Thus, Peter is identifying Jesus Christ as both Savior and God (Isaiah 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 60:16; Romans 9:5; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8).

We give our sin to Jesus, and He gives us His righteousness. The only way that faith comes after righteousness is when we receive the gift of faith. It takes faith to receive the righteousness of Christ. This is the faith that is activated within ourselves. The faith, here, is the abundance of faith that we receive as a gift of the Spirit.

2 Peter 1:2 "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,"

“Knowledge”: This is a strengthened form of “knowledge” implying a larger, more thorough, and intimate knowledge. The Christian’s precious faith is built on knowing the truth about God (verse 3). Christianity is not a mystical religion, but is based in objective, historical, revealed, rational truth from God and intended to be understood and believed. The deeper and wider that knowledge of the Lord, the more “grace and peace” are multiplied.

This is a blessing Peter speaks on those who believe. The more you know of Jesus, the more peace and grace you have. Jesus is King of Peace. When we are full of Jesus, we are full of peace. Knowledge is accumulated learning.

Verses 3-4: “His divine power”: is a title for God used by Jews who revered Him so much that they would not pronounce His name.

2 Peter 1:3 "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:"

“His divine power”: “His” refers to Jesus Christ. Christ’s power is the source of the believer’s sufficiency and perseverance (Matt. 24:30; Mark 5:30; Luke 4:14; 5:17; Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 12:9).

“That pertain unto life”: The genuine Christian is eternally secure in his salvation and will preserve and grow because he has received everything necessary to sustain eternal life through Christ’s power.

There is no need for a Christian to fear. The things of this world are for our benefit, not for our harm. He thought so much of us that He made the world and all that is in it, and on it, for the benefit of man. He prepared the earth for man to inhabit. Then He made man.

We have all the goodness of the earth to draw from, if we receive the knowledge of God and use it according to His will. The power to use the blessings comes from us knowing the power in the name of Jesus. He gave us the earth to use, not to abuse. Jesus called us to receive His glory and virtue.

“Godliness”: To be godly is to live reverently, loyally and obediently toward God. Peter means that the genuine believer ought not to ask God for something more (as if something necessary to sustain his growth, strength and perseverance was missing), to become godly. Because he already has every spiritual resource to manifest, sustain, and perfect godly living.

“Knowledge of him”: “Knowledge” is a key word in 2 Peter (verses 2, 5, 6, 8; 2:20; 3:18). Throughout Scripture, it implies an intimate knowledge (Amos 3:2). The knowledge of Christ emphasized here is not 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 (Matt. 7:21).

When we come to the knowledge of God, we receive Jesus as Savior and all the earth is subject to the name of Jesus. We have been given power to use that name on the earth. The part in this that we play, other than accepting Jesus as our Savior, is to walk in the salvation He has provided for us. “Virtuous” means we are faithful to Jesus and His teachings.

“Called us to glory and virtue”: This call, as always when mentioned in the New Testament epistles; is the effectual call to salvation (1 Peter 1:15; 2:21; 5:10). This saving call is based on the sinner’s understanding of Christ’s revealed majesty and moral excellence evidencing that He is Lord and Savior. This implies that there must be a clear presentation of Christ’s person and work as the God-Man in evangelism, which attracts men to salvation (1 Cor. 2:1-2). The cross and resurrection most clearly reveal His “glory and excellence.”

2 Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

“Great and precious promises”: That is, the promises of abundant and eternal life.

“Partakers of the divine nature”: This expression is not different from the concepts of being born again, born from above (John 3:3; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), being in Christ (Rom. 8:1), or being the home of the Trinity (John 14:17-23). The precious promises of salvation result in becoming

God's children in the present age (John 1:2; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27), and thereby sharing in God's nature by the possession of His eternal life.

Christians do not become little gods, but they are "new creatures" (2 Cor. 5:17), and have the Holy Spirit living in them (1 Cor. 6: 19-20). Moreover, believers will partake of the divine nature in a greater way when they bear a glorified body like Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3).

"Escaped the corruption": The word "corruption" has the idea of something decomposing or decaying. "Escaped" depicts a successful flight from danger. At the time of salvation, the believer escapes from the power which the rottenness in the world has over him through his fallen, sinful nature.

The promises God made to Abraham are for all who believe in Jesus.

Galatians 3:29 "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

It is our faith in Christ that makes us heirs along with faithful Abraham. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto Him as righteousness. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are clothed in His righteousness. The entire New Testament is a list of the promises made to the believer. To inherit the promises, we must prove we are sons of God.

Christians are followers of, and believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to become Christ-like. We, in fact, must let Christ live in us and through us. We are His hands upon this earth. When we get to heaven, we will be like Him.

1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

This Scripture just means that we will take on His nature (in our spiritual body). We have crucified our flesh and the lusts of the flesh, and have taken on Christ.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Verses 5-7: In this section Peter urges his readers to grow to spiritual maturity. "Add to your faith" indicates the areas of growth that follow after salvation. "Virtue" is moral excellence. "Knowledge" is spiritual truth. "Temperance" is self-control. "Patience" is endurance. "Godliness" is godlikeness. "Brotherly kindness (Greek philadelphian), is brotherly love. "Charity" (Greek agape), is volitional love. This process is a lifelong cycle of spiritual growth for all believers.

2 Peter 1:5 "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;"

Because of all the God given blessings (in verses 3-4), the believer cannot be indifferent or self-satisfied. Such an abundance of divine grace calls for total dedication.

“Giving all diligence”: That is, making maximum effort. The Christian life is not lived to the honor of God without effort. Even though God has poured His divine power into the believer, the Christian himself is required to make every disciplined effort alongside of what God has done (Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:28-29).

“Add to your faith virtue”: Another way of putting this is “In your faith supply”. “Supply” is to give lavishly and generously. In Greek culture, the word was used for a choirmaster who was responsible for supplying everything that was needed for his choir. The word never meant to equip sparingly, but to supply lavishly for a noble performance.

God has given us faith and all the graces necessary for godliness (verses 3-4). We add to those by our diligent devotion to personal righteousness.

First in Peter’s list of virtues is a word that, in classical Greek, meant the God-given ability to perform heroic deeds. It also came to mean that quality of life which made someone stand out as excellent. It never meant cloistered excellence, or excellence of attitude, but excellence which is demonstrated in life. Peter is here writing of moral energy, the power that performs deeds of excellence.

“Knowledge”: This means understanding, correct insight, truth properly comprehended and applied. This virtue involves a diligent study and pursuit of truth in the Word of God.

We should earnestly try to please God in all that we do. "To be diligent in our work" would mean that we are totally dedicated to the task at hand. We should not only be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word as well. The walk of a Christian must be virtuous. We must walk holy before our Lord.

To walk virtuous would mean that we had determined in our heart to do right before our God. To be virtuous, without the knowledge of what God's will is, is impossible. To walk in the will of God, we must know what His will is. We learn what His will is by studying His Word. Knowledge of the Word of God gives us the ability to know what His will is.

2 Peter 1:6 "And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;"

When we walk in the knowledge of the Word of God, we will be temperate in all things. "Temperance", in this instance, means self-control. It also means moderately. The way I like to say this is, "let your spirit control your flesh". Patience is a lesson hard learned. Patience comes through tribulation.

“Self-control”: Literally “holding oneself in.” In Peter’s day, self-control was used of athletes who were to be self-restrained and self-disciplined. Thus, a Christian is to control the flesh, the passions, and the bodily desires, rather than allowing himself to be controlled by them (1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:23). Moral excellence, guided by knowledge, disciplines desire and makes it the servant, not the master, of one’s life.

“Patience”: That is, patience or endurance in doing what is right, never giving in to temptation or trial. Perseverance is that spiritual staying power that will die before it gives in. It is the virtue which can endure, not simply with resignation, but with a vibrant hope.

Turning your will over to God and allowing Him to have control of your life, leads to godliness.

2 Peter 1:7 "And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

“Brotherly kindness”: Literally brotherly affection, mutual sacrifice for one another (1 John 4:20). Charity is love (see 1 Cor. 13 which is the love chapter).

All of this is explaining the growing in grace that a Christian must do.

Jesus said in 1 John 4:20 "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

"Charity" here, was translated from the word "agape", which means a special love. It is like the love of God. It is love not because of what you can do for me, but love wanting nothing in return.

2 Peter 1:8 "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make [you that ye shall] neither [be] barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

“Neither be barren” meaning to be inactive, indolent, and empty (Titus 1:12; James 2:20-22). With these virtues increasing in one’s life (verses 5-7), a Christian will not be useless or ineffective.

“Nor unfruitful”: Meaning unproductive (Matt. 13:22; Eph. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:14; Jude 12). When these Christian qualities are not present in a believer’s life (verses 5-7), he will be indistinguishable from an evildoer or a superficial believer. But when these qualities are increasing in a Christian’s life, there is the manifestation of the “divine nature” within the believer.

If these things be in you, you are full of Christ. In the process, you have taken on the nature of Christ. When you take Christ on in His fullness like is spoken of here, you have taken on the mind of Christ. You are allowing the Holy Spirit to teach you all things.

Your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will be full, because He dwells within you. The name "Lord Jesus Christ" means that you have accepted Him as your Savior and your Lord. You also realize, He is the Anointed One of God, the Messiah.

2 Peter 1:9 "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

"These things are those mentioned (in verses 5-7).

"Blind and cannot see afar off": A professing Christian who is missing the virtues mentioned above is, therefore, unable to discern his true spiritual condition, and thus can have no assurance of his salvation.

"Forgotten": The failure to diligently pursue spiritual virtues produces spiritual amnesia. Such a person, unable to discern his spiritual condition, will have no confidence about his profession of faith. He may be saved and possess all the blessing of verses 3-4, but without the excellences of verses 5-7, he will live in doubt and fear.

It is a very dangerous thing not to grow in God. The one-time experience of salvation is not enough. We are either growing in Christ, or we are going backwards. We will never stand still. Notice, the word "old" connected to sins. To live as the world lives after you are saved, will draw you away from your salvation.

Salvation is a daily walk through life, growing each day more like Jesus. To do anything else will not work. We can be blinded by the world, if we are not careful, and forget the forgiveness we received in Christ.

Verses 10-11: "Ye shall never fall". The author is not referring to falling from salvation, but to failure in Christian living.

"The everlasting kingdom" refers to the eternal realm of God where Jesus is the undisputed Ruler. It is synonymous with heaven. Thus, the one who acquires the virtues of verses 5-7 will have a rich inheritance in heaven.

2 Peter 1:10 "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"

"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure": This expresses the bull's eye Peter has been shooting at (in verses 5-9). Though God is "certain" who His elect are and has given them an eternally secure salvation, the Christian might not always have assurance of his salvation. Security is the Holy Spirit revealed fact that salvation is forever. Assurance is one's confidence that he possesses that eternal salvation.

In other words, the believer who pursues the spiritual qualities mentioned above guarantees to himself by spiritual fruit that he was called (Rom. 8:30; 1 Peter 2:21), and chosen (1 Peter 1:2), by God to salvation.

“Never fall”: As the Christian pursues the qualities enumerated by Peter (verses 5-7), and sees that his life is useful and fruitful (verse 8), he will not stumble into doubt, despair, fear, or questioning, but enjoy assurance that he is saved.

We must take up our cross daily and follow Jesus.

John 8:12 " Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

This is just saying, make up your mind to walk with Jesus and never wander away from that walk. If I am in Jesus, and He is in me, I cannot fall.

2 Peter 1:11 "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

“Entrance ... ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom”: Dedicated Christians, who grow and become fruitful, cultivating through God’s provision and power the prime qualities of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and brotherly love, will never stumble or fall.

Peter piles up the words to bring joy to the weary Christian’s heart. An abundant entrance into eternal heaven is the hope and reality for a Christian who lives a faithful, fruitful life here on earth. Peter’s point is that a Christian who pursues the list virtues (verses 5-7), will not only enjoy assurance in the present, but a full, rich reward in the future life (1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 22:12). A full reward awaits the faithful, godly believer in Christ’s ever-lasting kingdom (see Eph. 2:6-7).

There is only one way to heaven. It is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Daniel 7:27 "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom [is] an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Jesus opened the way for all who would believe, when He gave His body on the cross. The door to heaven and the throne of God was opened, when the veil of the temple was torn from the top to the bottom. Jesus opened that door for us.

Matthew 27:51 "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;"

There is only one thing that will get you to heaven. Look, with me, at the next verses which explain it so well.

Romans 10:9-10 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

2 Peter Chapter 1 Questions

1. What is the theme of this second letter?
2. Who wrote this letter?
3. Approximately when was this letter written?
4. When was the name Simon used for Peter?
5. What is the meaning of the name "Peter"?
6. Who was this letter written to?
7. Why did Peter think of himself as a slave?
8. What does "apostle" mean?
9. When do we receive righteousness?
10. What blessing did Peter speak on them?
11. What is knowledge?
12. Why should the Christian not fear?
13. What did God do for man, even before He made man?
14. What does "virtuous" mean?
15. What must we do to receive the inheritance God has given us?
16. What are we to add to our faith?
17. What would it mean "to be diligent in our work"?

18. What must we first do to walk in the will of God?
19. How do we know what His will is?
20. What does "temperance" in verse 6 mean?
21. What was the word "charity", in verse 7, translated from?
22. What does "agape" mean?
23. In the process of growth as a Christian, we have taken on the _____ of Christ.
24. How can we be blinded, if we are a Christian?
25. What cleanses us from all sin?
26. Who is our Way to heaven?
27. When was the door to the throne of God opened to us?