

A STUDY OF 2 PETER

The Greeting (2 Peter 1:1,2)

The letter of 2 Peter is the second penned by the Apostle Peter. This letter is not addressed to a particular church or churches though it seems likely that it was sent to the same original audience as 1 Peter. (See 2 Peter 3:1) This would be a primarily Gentile Christians living in Asia Minor including such places as Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

In this letter, Peter indicates that his death is near (1:14). 2 Peter was likely written about AD 67 and early Christian writers tell us that the Apostle Peter was martyred in Rome around AD 68 during the reign of Nero. The persecution against Christians by Nero began in Rome in AD 64.



The letter of 1 Peter addressed problems from outside the church as Christians faced severe persecution. 2 Peter is directed towards internal problems in the church. In 1 Peter, Christians are urged to bear up under persecution through submission to Christ, while in 2 Peter Christians overcome internal pressures through a knowledge of the truth.

1. In what three ways does the author of 2 Peter identify himself and what significance is found in these designations?
2. How does Peter address his original readers? (vs. 1)
3. Who does Peter have in mind when he uses the word “ours” in verse 1?

Peter’s readers had “obtained” their faith. This came by God’s gracious provision as the gospel was preached to them. The words “equal standing” or “equal privilege” in verse 1 was sometimes used “to describe immigrants who received citizenship privileges equal to those of native inhabitants.”² Peter encourages his readers that their faith was equal even to that of the apostles. In using “faith” here, Peter is not saying the level or degree of their faith was equivalent to the apostles, but rather the benefits obtained by faith were the same.

These Christians possessed a precious faith that was made possible through the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God refers to God’s fair and equitable dealing or his justice which

¹ The only other time the apostle is called Simeon is in Acts 15:14 and is the Aramaic rendering of the Hebrew “Simon.” Jesus called the apostle “Peter” in Mark 3:16. In John 1:42, Jesus names the apostle “Cephas,” which means Peter. Cephas is the Aramaic name and Peter the Greek.

² Constable, Thomas. *Notes on 2 Peter*. p. 4.

permitted him to accept the sacrifice of Jesus as payment for the penalty for man's sin. It furthermore indicates that God accepts all men equally whether Jew or Gentile.

Peter uses the exact language of 1 Peter 1:2 in 2 Peter 1:2 when he prays, “*May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*” Grace is undeserved blessing (or unmerited favour) that comes to the Christian from God. Peace describes the absence of conflict with God that is possible in Christ. Peter's desire is that grace and peace are growing or increasing in the life of the Christian.

Grace and peace come “*in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*” “This knowledge is both informational and relational.”³ Christians both know about God factually as well as knowing him relationally as their Father.

The word translated as knowledge in 2 Peter 1:2 is the Greek word *epignosis* and is used in 1:3, 8, 2:20, and 2:21.” It is more than knowledge as we understand knowledge. This word indicates a “precise and correct knowledge. It is more than acquiring a bundle of facts and placing them in the memory; it is understanding those facts and their relation to one another. It denotes exact or full knowledge, and expresses a greater care and concern on the part of the knower.”⁴ Peter does not just want his readers to know about Jesus; he wants them to know Jesus. Christians are to know both intellectually and personally.

4. How do Christians get to know God?

Blessings in Christ (2 Peter 1:3-4)

The first blessing that Peter identifies is “*his divine power*” which “*has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness.*” To say that Jesus is divine is to say that He is God. Peter says that this divine power gives Christians everything needed for life and godliness. This power does not come from within the Christian. It does not come from sheer determination. This power comes from Christ. We are drawn to Jesus as we come to know his “*glory and excellence.*” The word glory describes the very nature of God or all his attributes rolled up into one word. Excellence or virtue is his moral character.

5. What is godliness?

6. To what has Christ called us? (verse 3)

7. What is the significance of the words “all things” in verse 3? (Some translations use the word “everything”)



³ Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com, 2010. p. 114.

⁴ Oberst, Bruce. *Letters from Peter* in the Bible Study Textbook Series. College Press, Joplin, MO 1962. p.137.



8. How does Peter describe God's promises in verse 4?

9. What makes something precious?

10. List some of the promises that God has made to the Christian?

The Christian could not overcome in this world without the precious and very great promises that God makes. These promises change the Christian so that through them “*you may become partakers of the divine nature.*” Christians participate in the divine nature. While this sounds (and is) pretty amazing we may struggle to understand what it means.

To say that we partake in the divine nature is **not** to say that we are divine. We are not all knowing. We are not ever present. We are not all powerful. We are not God and we are not divine. However, we participate or are a part of the one who is divine. Galatians 3:26,27 teaches that, “*for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” It is an amazing truth that, as Christians, we are at this very moment partakers or participants of the divine nature with Christ. We are made holy in him, we have his Holy Spirit residing in our lives, and we are promised an eternity in his presence. We partner or share in the life of the one who is divine.

11. According to verse 4, what have we escaped as Christians?

12. Define corruption.

13. What causes this corruption?

The key to life and godliness, glory and excellence, partaking of the divine nature, and escaping the corruption of this world comes in knowing Christ. It is vitally important that we not only know about him (possess information), but that we know him personally. We cannot know him apart from the truth of his word in which he has revealed himself to us.