

2 Peter 1 – Chapter Study

CHAPTER 1

1 Simon Peter,

Simon Peter, the author of 1 & 2 Peter, is a fascinating guy.

I am so thankful that Jesus selected him to be one of the original disciples.

Peter lived in the northern region of Israel – called Galilee; an area that was kind of the backwoods, if you will, of the nation.

The people of the sophisticated south around Jerusalem, considered the Galileans to be *hillbillies* – they even had an accent that made them sound uneducated and simple.

But Galilee was the breadbasket of the land, much like our San Joaquin and Central Valleys.

The reason for the lush vegetation was that right in the middle of the Galilee is a beautiful lake which is fed from the melting snows of the mountains on the northern border of Israel.

This lake, called the *Sea of Galilee* in the Bible, teems with freshwater fish and a sizable fishing industry thrived on it's shore.

Peter, along with his brother Andrew, and their partners, John and James, the sons of a man named Zebedee conducted a fairly profitable fishing business there.

Andrew, Peter's brother, seems to have been something of a seeker and when John the Baptist started preaching not far away down the Jordan River which runs through the lake, Andrew went and became one of John's disciples.

One day, while John was baptizing people, telling them to get ready because the Messiah was coming, Jesus came and was baptized.

As he walked away, John declared Him to be the long awaited Messiah.

At that point, Andrew left John and started following Jesus.

Then Andrew brought his brother Peter to meet Jesus.

It was at that first meeting that Jesus informed Peter that he had a special future.

It happened this way –

Peter's original name was Simon, which means "flat-nosed."
But at that first meeting, Jesus told Simon that he would be given a new name – "Cephas" which is Aramaic for "rock" – or the Greek equivalent – "Peter."

Giving someone or something a name was highly symbolic in that culture and time.

A name was thought to embody an essence and chart a future.

So to name something meant that you possessed the right of ownership or had the responsibility of oversight for the person or thing named.

At this first meeting of Jesus and Simon, when Jesus gave him a new name, Jesus was making a claim on Simon – and everyone knew it.

A bit later, Jesus comes down to the shore of the lake and finds Peter, James and John just coming in from a long night of fishing with meager results.

Jesus tells them to launch out once more and drop their nets all over again.

Peter is tired, discouraged, and probably a bit bugged now; who does this guy think He is?

Word has it he's a carpenter and mason, what does he know about fishing.

But Peter complies. They set out again, but don't go to far from shore and drop their nets again.

Immediately they are filled with fish and Peter has to call James and John and the other boat over to help pull in the catch.

They haul away and pile dozens of fish into the hold, and then it hits Peter – this is all Jesus' doing.

He throws himself at Jesus' feet and declares himself unworthy.

You see, in that instant, Peter realized just who was in his boat with him – The Messiah!

And this man named Jesus is much more than a man; He possesses authority over the powers of nature.

That's when Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of *men!*"

Peter left his nets and boats and spent the next 3 years following Jesus.

But his history as a disciple was checkered.

There were times when Simon Peter was brilliant and stands out head and shoulders above the others.

Then there are times when he sticks his big size 14's in his mouth and makes a total fool of himself.

We're left with the impression that Peter was a physically large man, and that he tended toward being impetuous; knew he was impetuous, and tried to change with varying success.

He vows his undying and unflinching loyalty to Jesus one minute – faces down an angry mob in the Garden of Gethsemane and is even willing to go to battle to protect Jesus.

But then the next minute he's running away, and when charged by a young girl as being a follower of Jesus, he curses a vow of innocence.

Peter is a strange mix of courage and cowardice, loyalty and disloyalty, insight and dullness.

He's the kind of guy who tends to do everything on a grand scale; when he's good, he's very, very good, and when he's bad, he's horrible!

Jesus knew what He was getting when He picked Simon Peter to be His disciple.

Jesus looked beyond the lump of human clay that was “Simon Flat Nose” and saw what the Spirit of God would mold him in to – Peter the Rock!

In the same way, God looks at each and every one of us and sees, not what we are now, but what Faith in His Son and the Work of the Holy Spirit will accomplish in us.

Before Christ comes in to our lives, we are the proverbial ugly duckling.

But the new life that faith in Jesus produces in us, grows into a beautiful swan to grace the very throne room of Heaven.

Just as Jesus gave Flat Nose a new name, Rock – so you and I are promised a new name.

In Rev. 2:17, Jesus said that those who overcome will receive a new name.

That name will be far more than a label, a tag we answer to – it

will be a summary of all we are – a name unique to each of us that captures the essence of who and what God created us to be. The call of Simon Peter to be a disciple of Jesus ought to give all of us great encouragement.

If the Lord would pick someone like he and transform him into the man who wrote 1 & 2 Peter, there is hope for all of us!

Why Did Peter Write This Letter?

The theme of 2 Peter is found in the last 2 vs. –

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; **18** but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter uses these 3 chapters to first of all *warn* his readers against false teachers, and then to exhort them to press on and *grow* strong in Christ.

It seems that the *future persecution* he'd warned about in 1 Peter has now come and besides the threat from without, there's a growing challenge from within the Church in the form of errant or false doctrine.

Peter's emphasis on the words "know" and "knowledge" point to the fact that whatever false teaching they were dealing with, it had to do with *the intellect*.

This gives us a clue that the seeds of a heresy called *Gnosticism* were already begin sown in the early church.

The Greek word for *knowledge* is *gnosis*, and Gnosticism was a religion that elevated knowledge nearly to the rank of deity.

Gnosticism didn't really become a full-fledged religion until the late 2nd, early 3rd Century.

It was a strange mish-mash of Greek philosophy, Eastern mysticism, Jewish cosmology, and Christian terminology. The Gnostics taught that salvation lay in knowledge; and that ignorance was the root of all evil.

They considered all physical matter to be inherently and

unalterably evil while the realm of the spirit was only good. Salvation was found in being taught deeper, secret truths, that were only imparted to those who had proven themselves worthy of such knowledge by acts of extreme devotion and paying a fee. For the Gnostics, salvation wasn't about being cleared of the guilt of sin, but by transcending the limitations of the body and the material world and entering a mental state where the distinctions between good and evil were erased.

As I mentioned, Gnosticism didn't become a full-fledged religion until well after the NT was written, but the basic ideas were already floating around.

This is why several of the NT letters speak strongly to the issue of *knowledge*; the NT writers knew that they couldn't let the early Gnostic teachers get away with their claim to superior knowledge. Colossians, 2 Peter, Jude, and 1 John are all directed at the seeds of Gnosticism which were already at work in their day.

All of chapter 2 is a serious refutation and harsh rebuke of errant doctrine and false teachers.

But before confronting error, Peter gives a description of the Christian life.

The best way to detect falsehood is to be thoroughly familiar with the truth.

Bank tellers are taught to detect counterfeit money by learning the feel of real money.

After spending so much time handling real money, when a fake bill slips through their hands, they know it instantly.

I learned this first hand from counting money at Del Taco in the 13 years I worked there.

Doing deposits twice a day and handling so many \$1 bills – I just knew it when a fake changed hands when counting.

The best way to prepare for dealing with heresy is to be intimate with the Truth.

**¹Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have obtained like precious faith with us
by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus
Christ:**

I must tell you that the authorship of 2 Peter is hotly disputed in modern scholarship.

Of course, modern scholarship takes a pessimistic view of the genuine authorship of *most* of the NT, so that's not really saying much.

The main cause of the dispute is the very different style of writing that's used between 1 & 2 Peter.

But this can be easily answered by the fact that in 1 Peter, Peter used a scribe – Silvanus, to write the letter while he merely dictated.

It's very possible that Peter may have talked over what he wanted written in 1 Peter with Silvanus and then asked him to write it up in a manner that was more appropriate to written text.

Then when Silvanus read it back to make sure it's what Peter wanted, Peter gave his approval.

But Peter *personally penned* this second letter and the tone is much more blunt, the words more power-packed, the sense more urgent, and sounds a lot more like the text of a *speech* than a written letter. Since we see Peter more in the role of a public speaker in the NT, this is the best explanation for the differences in style.

Evidence *supporting* Peter as the author is what we find in Chapter 1 – the author claims to be none other than Peter the Apostle.

Plus – both letters use many similar phrases that are found in no other NT book.

Peter loved to use different words and turns of phrase and both books have an abundance of these. [\[1\]](#)

Peter refers to his *first* letter and the fact of his imminent demise in this letter.

From that we can determine that he probably wrote this in 67 or 68 AD during the reign of Nero.

Peter was put to death by Nero in Rome in 68.

Notice how Peter refers to himself – he is both a *bondservant* & *apostle*.

As we've seen in our series on Sunday morning for the last 4

weeks – Jesus continuing lesson on greatness was finally learned by the apostles.

They didn't seek to "lord it over" the flock God had called them to serve.

Peter doesn't address this to a specific church or group – it's a general letter to all who have been saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Note the end of v. 1 –

our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

The construction of the Greek language here is certain – God & Savior both refer to Jesus Christ.

If you are looking for one quick passage which *absolutely affirms* the deity of Jesus Christ this is one of the best.

²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

One evidence for this being authored by Peter is that this greeting is precisely the same as for 1 Peter.

Notice how he links grace and peace to the Knowledge of God!

Grace and peace are not entities unto themselves - They flow from *knowing* God.

Our apprehension of grace and peace is *directly proportional* to our knowledge of God for He is the Author, the Source of grace and peace.

It has always been true, those who know God, stand in grace and have peace.

And those who are gracious and settled, are those who *know* God.

³as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Peter tells us that God has given us everything we need to live a life that is both real & full.

The location, the center of *all that* is found in nothing less than *knowing* God.

How powerful is God? He is **ALL-POWERFUL**.

God exercises that power and gives us what's needed, not only to grow spiritually, but for the life we live in the here and now. How many of our needs does God take care of? **ALL** of them.

His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain to life and godliness*.

How does His power come to us? What's the avenue, the course by which this flows to us?

through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

The bottom line of all life is to *Know* God!

This is the subject of my message Sunday, so I'll leave further comment till then.

⁴by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

2 Cor. 5:17 says that if we are *in Christ*, we are *new* creatures; the old has passed away and we have become new.

In Romans 6 we read that faith in Christ means that our *old self* was crucified with Christ and we have been raised to a *new life* through the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

This means that we have entered into a *whole new order of humanity*.

There is, as the group Switchfoot sings, a *new way to be human*. The Cross of Christ is our way of escape from a life dominated by carnal lusts that would keep us tied to sin and death.

In the place of these harmful desires the Spirit is creating in us a *whole new set of desires* that move us to yearn after righteousness and the qualities of God Himself.

God first *gives* us these new desires, and then He fulfills them.

Through the knowledge of God comes **exceedingly great and precious promises**.

Peter uses grand terms to describe what God has made over to us because of our faith in Christ.

They are exceedingly great – meaning they are massive and overwhelming!

God is no miser in the dispensing of His love and grace – He is a *Lavish Lover* and spares nothing in pouring out His abundance on His own.

If we fail to gather in that abundance the problem is not with the supply, it's with the measure of our capacity to receive. God is pouring out a river of blessing, but many of us come with only a thimble to catch it.

There once was a man who lived in a convalescent hospital.

He tried to cheer the other residents by cutting pictures out of magazines and attaching bible verses to them; trying to match up the verse with an appropriate picture.

But he was never able to find a picture to match this verse – one of his favorites.

Then one day he was looking through a travel magazine and saw a panoramic picture of Niagara Falls and exclaimed – “That’s it.” God’s promises are exceedingly great, like Niagara Falls.

They are massive, and overwhelming.

If they weren’t, then there would be no cause or reason to worship God.

You see, worship must contain a strong element of awe!

Without awe, without a sense of being overwhelmed and surprised, there is no real motivation to worship.

At it’s core, worship is the spontaneous expression of a heart overwhelmed by goodness and beauty – there has to be a strong element of awe – of realizing you’re in the presence of something bigger than yourself.

The Christian is given a lifetime’s worth of motivation to worship in his or her salvation.

I’ve walked with Christ now for 37 years – and yet I will never forget that period of time when God drew me to Himself, convicted me of my sin and showed me the remedy in Christ.

Everything I think of it I am overwhelmed by God’s love and mercy and am moved to praise and worship Him.

But then God goes on and *continues* to pour out His grace in lavish supply.

When I’m paying attention, I find an infinite number of things to be surprised by in His goodness toward me.

Oh friends, God is no miser, no Scrooge who only doles out a half-

penny to rid himself of pesky beggars.
He is a heavenly Niagara that wants to carry us away with
blessing!

Then Peter calls them, *precious* promises, meaning they are valuable!
They're precious precisely because of *Who* they come from and
what they accomplish.

They come from God and their aim is to make us like Him!
Peter says that it is by these wonderful promises that we're being
changed from the old to the new.

One difficult lesson for an astronaut to learn is that his physical
movements, learned on earth, are inappropriate in space.
The astronaut takes a normal step, and bounds off the floor several
feet into the air.

He needs to learn to shuffle his feet to keep contact between
magnetic shoes and the metal spacecraft.

He grasps a wrench to turn a bolt, and finds himself, not the bolt,
turned by the force he exerts.

In his new environment the astronaut's old instincts are wrong!
Like the astronaut, the Christian lives in a new environment: the
Kingdom of God.

The desires that shaped us before we knew Christ produce the
wrong responses now.

So God is placing in us a whole new set of desires, and then
fulfilling those desires in abundant measure.

All of this comes about, as Peter says in v. 3, through the knowing
God.

5But also for this very reason,

Because God is pouring out His goodness in such lavish supply -
giving all diligence,

Bending every ounce of your will and effort -

**add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to
knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to
perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly
kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.**

Genuine spiritual birth will lead to solid spiritual growth.

It's the nature of life to grow and Peter reminds them that if their conversion has been the real thing, it will produce good fruit. To their faith in God must be added a desire for virtue, which is moral excellence.

To moral excellence must be added knowledge; meaning one of the marks of spiritual maturity is a hunger to learn more about God.

To this hunger to learn must be added self-control.

Knowledge that remains in the head and never affects the heart is useless.

As we saw last Sunday, Jesus said, "If you know these things – blessed are you if you DO them."

To self-control we must add perseverance; meaning we need to hang on to the end of the story.

To perseverance we must add godliness.

This is the Greek word *Eusebia*; which means piety, reverence, respect.

The person who was eusebia live a life in alignment with what they said they believed.

It's the opposite of being a hypocrite.

A hypocrite ha two faces; the godly has one.

The hypocrite says one thing and does something else; the godly man or woman does what they say.

To godliness we add brotherly kindness; which means we show a family kind of affection and devotion to one another in the Church.

Then we cap it off with love – agape; in which we seek the highest good for others with no thought of what we're going to get out of it.

8For if these things are yours and abound,

And there's no reason they *shouldn't* because our supply for them is the exceedingly great and precious promises of God -

you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Don't miss the point of what Peter is saying here: The knowledge of God he referred to in v. 3 will produce in us a nature that is modeled after God's own moral excellence.

He who says that he knows God but isn't godly, is fooling no one but himself.

10Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; **11**for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter is NOT saying that it is by our own efforts that we'll make it to heaven.

He's simply being realistic and saying that not all those who claim to be following Christ are in fact doing so.

The true followers will have a lifestyle patterned after Christ's and will bear good fruit that glorifies God.

Peter simply tells those who are real Christians to press on and make sure they are demonstrating the reality of their faith by a godly lifestyle.

12For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. **13**Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent,

Meaning this *body* -

to stir you up by reminding you, 14knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. **15**Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my **decease.**

Peter knows that what he's writing here is nothing new; he's broken no new theological ground here.

He's only repeating things they've already heard.

But he will repeat them because it's safe to do so.

As Paul says in Philippians 3:1 – “Finally brethren, rejoice in the

Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.”

Peter could see the handwriting on the wall and knew he didn't have much time left.

So he decided a timely word of exhortation and caution was safest before he checked out.

What he says in v.14 is interesting –

knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

Jesus had indicated to Peter that the day would come when he would be led out to die.

Then Jesus had Himself shown Peter how to die with dignity, purpose, and victory.

Now Peter is going to give a little background about his personal participation in the events of Jesus's earthly ministry.

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Peter is referring to what he, James and John saw on the Mount of Transfiguration -

17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” **18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.**

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed,

By *prophetic word* – Peter means all the OT passage which spoke of the coming Messiah.

Those prophecies had been *confirmed* and fulfilled in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark

place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

Peter means that just because the OT prophecies have been fulfilled, that doesn't mean they can now be neglected. On the contrary, their fulfillment adds even more weight and power to them, because they have been confirmed as the very Word of God.

One of the most powerful proofs for the Bible being the Inspired Word of God is prophecy.

Critics have tried to gainsay scripture and dismiss prophecy by coming up with all kinds of wild explanations for prophecy. Their explanations end up becoming more wild than simply accepting prophecy at face value!

It takes way more faith to believe their wild stories about how prophecy got into scripture than simply believing there's a God who stands above time and tells us what's going to occur.

Peter's point is that scripture is a light that we ought to look to to give us direction while we wait for the Lord to come again.

But then, Peter issues a warning about interpreting scripture -

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

This is such an important word because it places a huge caution before us regarding understanding the Bible.

Peter says that the Word of God was penned by godly men who were all moved by one Author – the Holy Spirit.

Because they were different men, we can expect the vocabulary and styles to be different – but because they were all inspired by the same Spirit, there will also be a consistency and constancy to it all that supercedes the differences.

And this is exactly the case.

Peter and Paul wrote very differently – but there is a unity in them and purpose behind them that's unmistakable.

John and Luke were radically different in their style and vocabulary – and their gospels are very different – but put

them side by side and we get an incredible picture of Jesus Christ; they amplify and supplement each other marvelously.

Compare Job and Malachi and you'll recognize huge differences, and yet you can't help but see below the surface to a deeper kindred of spirit than their words portray.

Because there is *only one real Inspiration, one real Author* of the scripture, and because that Author was trying to communicate a clear message – scripture isn't of any private interpretation – it isn't up for grabs – it doesn't mean whatever you or I want it to mean.

There is one correct meaning, and that's the one the Holy Spirit intended when He first inspired the man who penned it.

So no one can say today that they were deep in meditation in their prayer closet and while musing on Luke 13:34 had a vision that God is actually a chicken and heaven is a henhouse.

We need to be on the lookout for those who claim to have had some special revelation from God and want to take the Church away in a totally new direction.

I am growing weary of the many people who claim to have a fresh word from the Lord and who are proclaiming that a new day has dawned for the Church.

For 25 years now we've been hearing how we've entered the latter rains of the Spirit and that at any moment the Spirit of God will fall in such power the whole world will be saved.

This is so far off from what the Bible says will happen in the last days that's it would be laughable if it wasn't so tragic.

We have one well known Christian leader some years ago who claimed to have had a vision of a 90 foot tall Jesus who threatened to kill him if people didn't send in so many millions of dollars to help him complete a wing of his school.

There's several so called prophets who go around making wild statements and claims to be under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – and when their prophecies are proven false, no one holds them accountable, they remain as popular as ever.

Peter is going to go on in ch. 2 & warn about the false prophets – but let's end our study tonight with that –

CONCLUSION

V. 20 • no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

What I've said just now about those who claim to have had some special revelation and spin on the Word of God that flies in the face of all the rules of interpretation, applies just as equally to what you hear served up here on Wednesdays and Sundays. Don't accept it just because I or someone else who stands here says so.

I realize it good to want to trust me and that I've studied and sought the Lord for light on the meaning and application of the text.

But I am a man, and as a man, I am subject to error – I WILL MAKE MISTAKES in interpretation.

I hope that doesn't blow anyone's mind or shatter some kind of image of perfection you had of me.

I am far from perfect – far, far from it.

And I imagine God will *allow* me to make an occasional error in interpreting His word, just so that I can be corrected, reminded of my dependence on Him, and the need to be humble as I come to His Word.

But the point is this – YOU need to be studied enough in the scriptures that when something goofy is said, your goof-detector will start to siren.

[1]

Jerome himself explained that the difference in style could easily be attributed to the fact that Peter most likely used an amanuensis other than Silvanus who served Peter in writing his first letter (1 Peter 5:12). If Jerome is right, the differences in style are no greater than might have been expected, considering the different subject matter and different purposes for writing the two letters.

The similarities in style between the two books are just as striking as the differences. Both books are filled with *hapax legomena*, words that occur only once in the New Testament. Of the 686 *hapax legomena* in the New Testament, 1 Peter contains 62 and 2 Peter has 54—more, proportionately, than most New Testament books their size.

Ebright concludes that the noticeable differences are not between the two Petrine Epistles but between these Epistles and the rest of the New Testament. The prominence of *hapax legomena* in both books may point to a common author who had a rich vocabulary and a public speaker's flare for fresh creative expression.

It should not be considered remarkable, then, that a number of words and phrases are found only in these two epistles. Both books include the unusual salutation, "Grace and peace be yours in abundance" (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2). The term *aretas* ("praises") in 1 Peter 2:9, and *areteō* ("goodness") in 2 Peter 1:3 are forms of the same unique word and refer to the moral excellence and goodness of God. The word *apothesis* is used in the New Testament only in 1 Peter 3:21 and 2 Peter 1:14 and is translated "removal" and "put... aside," respectively. The graphic phrase *amoōmou kai aspilou*, used in 1 Peter 1:19 to refer to the sinlessness of Christ as One without "blemish or defect," is artfully rephrased in 2 Peter 2:13 as "blots and blemishes" to refer to the character of the false teachers. The phrase is used again in 3:14, *aspiloi kai*

amômeôtoi “spotless and blameless”), to challenge Christians to moral excellence in light of Christ’s return. The use of these and other unique words and phrases in these two epistles provides strong evidence of their common authorship.

Second Peter also reflects the unique vocabulary of Peter’s sermons recorded in the Book of Acts. One of the best examples is the verb *kolasoôntai* (“punish”), found only in Acts 4:21, and *kolazomenous* (“punishment”) in 2 Peter 2:9. Other similarities may be noted between 1:3 and Acts 3:12 (“power” and “godliness”) and between 2 Peter 2:13, 15 (*misthon adikias*, lit., “wages of wickedness”) and Acts 1:18 (*misthou teôs adikias*, lit., “reward of wickedness”).