



# SECOND PETER

Warnings against heresy

John West

Second Peter was probably written towards the end of Peter's life (he was martyred under Nero in 68). In his first letter he instructed his readers on how to deal with persecution from outside of the church. In this letter he warns against false teachers from within.

Although some dispute the authenticity of the letter, the differences in style to First Peter can be attributed to different secretaries.

As you answer the questions, comment on the significance of the words Peter uses. Try to especially explain the sentences and phrases that are in boldtype.

**1** <sup>1</sup>Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ:

<sup>2</sup>May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him **who called us by his own glory and goodness.** <sup>4</sup>Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature.

<sup>5</sup>For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup>and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. <sup>8</sup>For if these things are yours and are increasing among

How does Peter refer to himself and how does he describe his readers?

What titles does he give to Jesus?

What does he pray for his readers and how will they get it?

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What do God's promises enable?

Underline and comment on the things that support faith.

you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.

These things stop you from being....  
\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_  
in \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>10</sup>Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. <sup>11</sup>**For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.**

What should the knowledge spur us to do?

v11 Salvation by works? or additional rewards? or something else?

<sup>12</sup>Therefore I intend to keep on reminding you of these things, though you know them already and are established in the truth that has come to you. <sup>13</sup>I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to refresh your memory, <sup>14</sup>since I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. <sup>15</sup>And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

Why is Peter persistent in reminding them?

<sup>16</sup>For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well

What further reason becomes evident here for the reminders?

What eyewitness event is Peter referring to and what did he learn from it? (Mark 9 & Matthew 17). What does the event confirm for them and us?

pleased.”<sup>18</sup>We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

<sup>19</sup>So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, **until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.** <sup>20</sup>First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, <sup>21</sup>because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

**2**<sup>1</sup>But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup>Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned. <sup>3</sup>And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation, pronounced against them long ago, has not been idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

<sup>4</sup>**For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment;** <sup>5</sup>and if he did not spare the ancient world, even though he saved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he

What should we understand about Scripture and why is this understanding important?

Where do false teachers come from and what effect do they and their teachings have?

What do these verses (down to v10) tell us that God can do they both warn and encourage us?

brought a flood on a world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly; <sup>7</sup>and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless <sup>8</sup>(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds that he saw and heard), <sup>9</sup>then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment <sup>10</sup>—especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority.

Bold and wilful, they are not afraid to slander **the glorious ones**, <sup>11</sup>whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not bring against them a slanderous judgment from the Lord. <sup>12</sup>These people, however, are like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed. They slander what they do not understand, and when those creatures are destroyed, they also will be destroyed, <sup>13</sup>suffering the penalty for doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their dissipation while they feast with you. <sup>14</sup>They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! <sup>15</sup>They have left the straight road and have gone astray, following the road of Balaam son of

What are the characteristics of those falling into error, and what will be their fate vv10-22?

vv15-16 see Jude 11 & Numbers 22

Bosor, who loved the wages of doing wrong, <sup>16</sup>but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

<sup>17</sup>These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the deepest darkness has been reserved. <sup>18</sup>For they speak bombastic nonsense, and with licentious desires of the flesh they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. <sup>19</sup>They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them. <sup>20</sup>For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. <sup>21</sup>For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment that was passed on to them. <sup>22</sup>It has happened to them according to the true proverb,

“The dog turns back to its own vomit,”

and,

“The sow is washed only to wallow in the mud.”

Take a few quiet moments to think about what enslaves you & what you need to be freed from. Pray silently for the Holy Spirit to help you.

Discuss more generally the enslavements that people face and additional ways in which they can be helped to overcome them.

**3**<sup>1</sup>This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you <sup>2</sup>that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour spoken through your apostles. <sup>3</sup>First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts <sup>4</sup>and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" <sup>5</sup>They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, <sup>6</sup>through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup>But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.

<sup>8</sup>But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be

What does Peter want his readers to hold on to and why?

vv 3-10 What is the argument of the doubters and what, in your own words, is Peter's answer to them?

disclosed.

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

v11-15a What difference should these knowing these things make to the way

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup>speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, **as they do the other scriptures.** <sup>17</sup>You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. <sup>18</sup>But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

What do these verses indicate about Peter's regard for Paul's writings (esp v 16)?

To what extent could verse 18 be said to be a summary of the thrust of whole letter?

Take a few moments to look back over the letter.  
What has stood out for you?  
What has encouraged you most?  
What has challenged you?