

An In-Depth Study of the Second Letter of Apostle Peter

[Part 1]

Peter's first letter was written just before Emperor Nero began to persecute Christians, and was a letter of encouragement to prepare Christians for expected persecution.

This second letter focuses on the church's internal problems, especially on false teachers who were causing people to doubt their faith and turn away from Christianity.

Peter combats these heresies by denouncing the evil motives of these false teachers and reaffirming Christian truths.

Truths such as faith being the foundation of Christian maturity, and the certainty of Christ's second coming.

The letter opens with a subtle and beautiful allusion.

2 Peter 1:1 [King James] *“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 Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

Peter was talking as a Jew, who were the original *“chosen people of God.”*

Peter is telling those Gentiles [non-Jews] that they had received from God a faith in God that was as precious as he had as a Jew.

Gentiles called by God to become Christians were also a *“chosen people.”*

1 Peter 2:9-10 [NIV] *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

The lives of Gentiles had dramatically changed on their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Ephesians 2:11-18 [NIV] *“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men), remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”*

Two groups of people, divided by faith and customs had become one through faith in Jesus Christ and what He has done for all humanity.

The Greek word translated *“like”* is *“isōtimōs”* meaning equal in value and honour and like-minded.

Paul looked on Timothy as a man who was “*like-minded*” to him [same Greek word used in **Philippians 2:20** [King James Translation]]

Jews and Gentiles become “*like-minded*” through the knowledge and faith in the grace and righteousness of their Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:2 [King James] “*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,*”

Peter wanted this grace and the peace of mind it brought with it, to be multiplied in their day-to-day lives.

2 Peter 1:3 [King James] “*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:*”

Peter lifts the lives of both Jewish and Gentile Christians to a level that is beyond human endeavour.

The Greek means not only through this knowledge but in the power from God that comes with this knowledge.

Every Christian has available to them all that is needed to be moulded into the “*likeness*” [character] of our Creator God.

This “*likeness*” has been shown to us in the life, sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God but also the Son of Man.

2 Peter 1:4 [King James] “*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.*”

It is through our faith in these wonderful promises of grace and spiritual power that we will take on the very nature, character and likeness of the perfect Creator God.

Peter then shows us that attaining this nature of God is a process in which we all have a part to play, to fulfil what was commanded by Jesus Christ in **Matthew 5:48**.

An impossible command to fulfil by human endeavour.

2 Peter 1:5-7 [King James] “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*”

I am **not** in this article going to expound what is included in these verses as this is found in great detail in our article listed under ‘Maturity’ entitled ‘*The Ladder to Love and Perfection.*’

I would like you to study this article before you proceed any further in this article.

Other articles that I suggest you study in conjunction with this article are ‘*Work Out Your Own Salvation*’ listed under the heading ‘*Salvation*’. Also, ‘*Are We Resisting the Work of the Holy Spirit?*’ listed under the heading ‘*Holy Spirit*’. Also, ‘*The Working of God’s Holy Spirit In Us*’ listed under ‘*Holy Spirit*’.

2 Peter 1:8-11 [NIV] “*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. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*”

Peter strongly urges Christians to keep on climbing up this ladder of virtues which he has set before them.

To keep climbing this ladder is to come ever nearer to knowing Jesus Christ.

This diligence on our part, empowered by the inward work of the Holy Spirit, will prepare us for eternal life.

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now **this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**”*

Eternal life will be this continual intimate relationship with our Creator, continually having a deeper understanding of who and what He is.

1 John 5:11 [NIV] *“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”*

With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us we can here and now experience this intimate relationship with our Creator God.

On the other hand if we are **not** diligently climbing this ladder we are blind to the very reason God has given us physical life, the time needed to prepare for eternal life.

Such a failure is also to forget what had happened to us when we accepted Christ’s sacrifice as a substitute for our own deserved death.

Also we forget the baptism by total immersion symbolic of the death of our old way of living set us on the path of a new life dedicated to serving our Creator God. [Read **Romans 6:1-13**]

Peter then gives all Christians a wonderful goal to have continually before us.

A welcome by our Saviour into the eternal created family of God.

Matthew 25:14-21 [NIV] *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ “His master replied, ‘**Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!**””*

Notice in this parable of the talents given to us by Jesus Christ what the reward was.

The reward given to the faithful servants was more opportunities to serve but also the opportunity to share the wonderful life that our Creator Jesus Christ now lives in God the Father’s presence.

This reward also includes in helping to build a new world in which there will be no more pain or tears. [Read **Revelation 21:1-7**]

2 Peter 1:12-15 [NIV] *“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. **I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.** And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.”*

At my present age, well past the normal retirement age, I can relate to these words of Peter.

Every Christian should leave a legacy behind them of Christian living to their generation, family, close friends and all they meet in day-to-day life.

Psalms 23:6 [NIV] *“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”*

Our life should leave a trail behind us of good works and love for other human beings as well as love and praise for our Creator God.

2 Peter 1:16-18 [NIV] *“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received honour 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.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”*

A major part of the gospel message that the apostles brought to new Christians was the glorious return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

This second coming as world ruler and judge.

Peter had personally seen Jesus Christ in His glorified form. [**Matthew 17:1-5**]

Peter had personally seen the resurrected Jesus Christ and received personal instructions as to what he was commissioned to do. [**John 21:15-19**]

2 Peter 1:19 [NIV] *“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.**”*

Peter then directed his remarks in particular to the Jewish Christians, quoting scripture that prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah they were all looking for.

“Morning star” – the Greek word is “*phōsphōrōs*” the light-bringer and is symbolic of Jesus Christ who brought light with Him illuminating the very character, power and love of God the Father.

Throughout antiquity it was the planet Venus that appears in the sky just before dawn.

The use in this scripture accords with the star symbolism of Jesus Christ. [**Numbers 24:17; Luke 1:78-79; Revelation 22:16**]

2 Peter 1:20-21 [NIV] *“Above all, you must understand that **no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.** 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.**”*

Remember that the word used in the Greek translated “prophecy” is “*prophēteia*” signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God.

Throughout much of the Old Testament prophecy was purely predictive, especially directed towards the coming of Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament prophecy is **not** necessarily, nor even primarily, foretelling. It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural human thought.

1 Corinthians 2:7-16 [NIV] *“No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: “No eye has*

*seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way **no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.** We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. **The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.** The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment: “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” **But we have the mind of Christ.”***

It is only those who have the Holy Spirit working with or in them who can understand spiritual truths.

The “*mind of Christ*” is the presence of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit in us.

Prophecy is the forth-telling of the Will of God, in the New Testament, the present Will of God for each generation.

This is given to us through the words of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit inspired words of the apostles.

It is only in limited passages of scripture that the future is predicted in a very broad non-specific way.

For example by Jesus Christ, see **Matthew 24:1-44.**

By revelation given to the apostle John, recorded in a non-specific way in the **Book of Revelation.**

1 Corinthians 13:8-9 [NIV] *“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; **where there is knowledge, it will pass away.** For we know in part and we prophesy in part,”*

This scripture indicates that with the completion of the canon of scripture, prophecy will apparently pass away.

Today the teacher has taken the place of the predicting prophecy of the Old Covenant.

2 Peter 2:1 [NIV] *“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as **there will be false teachers among you.** They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.”*

The false prophets are those who seek to predict the future, especially the time of the return of Jesus Christ.

They are false because Jesus Christ acknowledged that even He **did not know** the time of His return [**Matthew 24:36**].

False teachers are those who do **not** preach Jesus Christ as the Sovereign Son of God. They reduce Jesus Christ to just another prophet or teacher, not the only Saviour of all humanity.

False teachers are those who teach we can earn salvation through the keeping of certain laws.

False teachers ignore the teaching of Jesus Christ who is the Head of the Church, who cannot be replaced by any human being, who may be voted in by other human beings to this office.

Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 2:6-10

The apostles often introduced themselves as the servant [Greek means “*bond slave*”] of Jesus Christ, which every true teacher or spiritual leader always acknowledges.

No human being should take on the title of vicar of Jesus Christ, for this means “*substitute of Jesus Christ*” the Latin “*vicarious*.”

It is through such false teachers and false prophets that “*destructive heresies*” are introduced to the human race, as well as the Christian Church.

2 Peter 2:2-3 [NIV] “*Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*”

Note that many will be deceived by these false teachers and prophets.

2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 13:15 [NIV] “*I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. **But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a **different spirit** from the one you received, or a **different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.” ... “**For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.** It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”*

Paul joins Peter in warning Christians of this deception that can so easily be accepted by people who are unaware of what Satan is doing in the world at this time.

If you find what these scriptures tell us hard to accept, I suggest you read some of our articles on Satan on this website.

Satan’s only aim is to cause humans to self-destruct and so miss out on the opportunity to receive the gift of eternal life.

As a “*bond slave*” of Jesus Christ I have followed the example of Paul in one passage of scripture and also the words of my Saviour Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:16-17 [NIV] “*Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.*”

I also feel compelled to preach the full gospel message out of gratitude of what God has done for me through Jesus Christ.

In that I have all the reward I will ever desire in this present life.

Matthew 10:8 [NIV] “*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. **Freely you have received, freely give.***”

As the Holy Spirit works in me I have for many years received insight into the will of my Creator God as His Word, the Christian Bible, has been opened up to my understanding, as it can be to any Christian.

Therefore I willingly and freely offer this knowledge to all who will read or listen.

For all this I **cannot** take any personal credit, being constantly reminded of two scriptures.

John 15:4-5 [NIV] *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

Apart from the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit working in me I cannot do anything that has any lasting value.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

This is the key scripture I have sought to live my life by, so that my worship of my Creator God will be acceptable to Him.