

EXPOSITION OF II PETER

Message #2

II Peter 1:1-2

One of the wildest testimonies you will ever read is the testimony of Augustine, the great theologian and bishop of Hippo. He tells an interesting story in his famous "*Confessions*." Prior to coming to faith in Christ, he had been a wild, immoral man and he spent time in a variety of party places. He said one time after he was saved, he traveled to one of the places he had been and an old girlfriend of his spotted him and started going after him. She said, "Augustine, Augustine, it is I," and Augustine turned and said, "Yes, but it is no longer I."

At one time, the Apostle Peter had been a hard drinking, immoral party man, who ran a fishing business. He said, by his own admission, that in times past he had lived his life that way. He listed things like pursuing sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries (I Peter 4:2-3). **He was, from the world's perspective, a man's man; but he had become God's man.** Peter had come to faith in Jesus Christ and he no longer pursued those things; he pursued the Word of God and the will of God. I like Peter because many of us can relate.

You and I are living in depraved times. We are living in times in which even religious people, including some religious leaders, get involved in immoral evil things. We live in times in which a true moral compass seems almost impossible to find. In the midst of this kind of world, we need a good dose of II Peter. This book says to every believer, you stay close to the Scriptures and don't you ever follow the destructive teachings and lifestyle of destructive teachers. Do not follow their lying, their greed, or their immorality. The first point Peter makes is this:

A KEY TO LIVING GODLY IN A GODLESS LUST-CRAZED WORLD IS TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU ONCE WERE IS NOT WHAT YOU ARE NOW, AND YOUR FOCUS NOW NEEDS TO BE ON GETTING DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD.

As we come to **II Peter 1:1-2**, we come to the opening introduction and salutation of the book. The opening of the book of II Peter is a typical Greek letter type of opening. What this means is that the author identifies himself and he also identifies the intended recipients of the document, and then gives some form of introductory greeting. The reason why this was done this way is so that the readers would not have to unravel a scroll to figure out who wrote it. However, since every word is inspired by God and not of man (II Peter 1:20-21), every word, even the introductory words, need to be carefully studied. There are three main preface introductory matters that begin this letter:

PREFACE INTRODUCTORY MATTER #1 – The introduction of the author . **1:1a**

Concerning the author we learn three facts:

Fact #1 - His name is Simeon Peter.

When we consider that this will be the final letter Peter will write before he dies, it is important to see how he identifies himself. No person had more options in identifying himself as Peter did. He had at least six option possibilities for introducing himself.

(Option #1) - He could have not named himself at all. He could have identified himself as “the elder,” like John did in II John and III John. One big difference is that John wrote much later when all other apostles were dead; and when Peter wrote, apostolic letters and authority were still being developed. When we consider that God’s Word is inspired to the very word (verbal inspiration), we may know God did want Peter to name himself.

(Option #2) - He could have called himself “Peter” (Πετρος), which was his Greek/Christian name that had been given to him by Jesus Christ (Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; John 1:42) which means rock.

(Option #3) - He could have called himself “Cephas” (Κηφας) which was the Aramaic name for Peter (John 1:42) which means stone or rock.

The Apostle Paul called Peter, “Cephas,” at different times (I Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14).

(Option #4) - He could have called himself “Simon” (Σιμων) which was the Greek pronunciation of his Jewish name (John 1:42).

(Option #5) - He could have called himself “Simon Peter” (Σιμων Πετρος).

The combination of “Simon Peter” or a variant of the combination (i.e. Simon who is called Peter) is used over 65 times in the Gospels and in Acts. This refers to his Jewish/Christian name. However, Peter did not use any of these ways to introduce himself, but came up with an unusual fifth option.

(Option #6) - He does call himself “Simeon Peter”(Συμεων Πετρος) in **II Peter 1:1**.

It is a very curious thing as to how Peter begins this book, and what catches most students eyes is the fact that he uses the Hebrew form of the word “Simeon” rather than the Greek form of the name, which is “Simon.” Most Jewish people named “Simeon” went by their Greek name “Simon.” But in this last letter, Peter decides to emphatically use the Jewish Simeon.

The name “Simeon” appears only seven times in the N.T. and sometimes it is used for the Jewish tribe of Simeon (Revelation 7:7), and sometimes it refers to another Jewish person whose name was Simeon (Luke 2:25,34; 3:30; Acts 13:1). **The only other place where this Hebrew spelling is used pertaining to Simon Peter is in Acts 15:14.**

Many have speculated as to why God led Peter to use this name in his last letter. The most logical answer is because Peter is emphasizing his original Hebrew name which he had when he was a hardcore sinner. He originally had been given this Hebrew name, “Simeon”. This was his old original name and perhaps he uses it here to show that this old Jewish man had become a transformed rock-solid man whose name was Peter. This name “Simeon” definitely points us to “his original Jewish origin.” **By using this combination of names, we are introduced to one who was originally an ungodly lustful Jew who is now a godly Grace Age Christian.**

David Helm observed, “When our writer is introduced as “Simeon Peter,” he wants us to know that we are meeting the whole man. We are listening to instructions from a complete and complex person. Here is a man with a real track record and a real history. Here is one well-acquainted with who he was at birth and who he is now in Christ” (*I & II Peter & Jude*, p. 185).

Peter was about to die and he is reflecting on who he had been in the past and who he was now in the present.

Fact #2 - He was a bond - servant of Jesus Christ.

It is actually a rare thing in the N.T. when a writer begins by identifying himself both as a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. There are only two other places in the N.T. where this combination is actually used (Romans 1:1; Titus 1:1), and neither of these Pauline uses are actually identical to Peter.

When you first think of the term “slave” you typically think of something humiliating, but actually, when it comes to God, this particular title is one of the most honorable titles one could have. Peter was a bond-slave of Jesus Christ. The prepositional phrase “of Jesus Christ” means that Peter viewed himself as a servant who was owned by and bound to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was Peter’s master and he was completely devoted to Him and completely submitted to Him.

William Barclay said to be a “bond-servant” means (*II Peter*, p. 293):

- 1) You are owned and possessed by God.
- 2) You are at the unqualified disposal of God.
- 3) You give unquestioned obedience to God.
- 4) You are continually in the service of God.

J. H. Jowett said, “At the heart of all true freedom there is certain bondage. ... The man who will not be bound to anything or anybody is always the most enslaved” (*The Epistles of Saint Peter*, p. 206). Peter was enslaved to Jesus Christ.

It is important to see that this great man of God, who by now had a reputation all over the world, wanted to be identified as a servant or bond-slave of Jesus Christ. The emphasis of this title is that Peter was bound to his master, Jesus Christ. Peter was not some popish prima donna. He was a servant just as every other believer. The fact that he was about to be executed meant that he even viewed his own death as service to God. He would die as God’s servant.

When we live in a sensual, lust-crazed world, one of the most purifying thoughts we may have is that I am a servant of Jesus Christ. You start rolling that around in your mind and it tends to have a cleansing effect.

Fact #3 - He was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Because of what Peter was going to develop in this letter, he begins by stressing the fact that this letter was written by an authoritative “apostle.”

Jesus Christ had specifically singled out Peter and chose him to be one of His own apostles. This was a very special calling. **Not many had apostleship status in Peter’s day and no one has it in our day.**

In order to be an apostle:

- 1) Apostles had to be handpicked by Jesus Christ (Acts 1:24);
- 2) Apostles had to have spent time physically with Jesus Christ (Acts 1:21-24);
- 3) Apostles had to have seen the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21-22);
- 4) Apostles had to have been taught specifically by Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12);
- 5) Apostles had to be able to perform the apostolic sign-gift miracles (II Corinthians 12:12).

As already stated, there are no apostles today, but Peter was an apostle who met all prerequisites of an apostle.

By identifying himself as an apostle, it immediately informs the reader that this is a very authoritative inspired letter of God. This is not some friendly chat around a campfire or a dying man sharing his warm feelings about life; this is an authoritative letter from God.

It is interesting to see the progression in Peter’s life. He goes from the old hardcore Jewish sinner named Simeon to faith in Christ and becomes Peter. Then he develops and becomes a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and then he is appointed to be an apostle.

Now when Peter identifies himself as an apostle “of Jesus Christ,” he is stressing the fact that he was an apostle whose source of apostleship was Jesus Christ and whose object of apostleship was Jesus Christ. **Jesus Christ made Peter an apostle and Peter’s whole focus and object in life was Jesus Christ.**

PREFACE INTRODUCTORY MATTER #2 – The introduction of the recipients. **1:1b**

Now we know from II Peter 3:1 that Peter is writing to a specific church or group of believers to whom he had previously written. It is certainly possible that this was the same group to whom he wrote I Peter. However, what is intriguing here is that Peter does not specifically identify the recipients by any name or any location which is typical of N.T. letters. What he truly wants to emphasize has to do with their faith.

There are three observations we want to make about these recipients:

Observation #1 - They have a “ received ” faith.

The participle “received” (λαγχανω) means to receive something or obtain something by a lot such as in a drawing for a lottery (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 263). By using this word, Peter is stressing that believers have been especially selected by God to receive their faith. The aorist tense of the participle indicates this happens at one point of time. There was nothing in us that merited God’s choice, but when He chose us, it was like we won the lottery.

If you are a believer, of all of the people in the universe, you were picked by God and given faith. You think about this in a godless, sensual, lust-crazed world. God has chosen you.

Observation #2 - They have a “ same kind ” of faith.

Concerning the recipients of the letter we learn that **Peter wrote this Epistle to believers who had received the same kind of faith that Peter and the other apostles had received.** Richard Lenski the old Lutheran scholar made an important observation when he said there is nowhere else in the Bible where the faith of the ordinary Christian is compared with that of the apostles like here (*II Peter*, p. 249).

Now the Greek adjective translated “same kind” (ισοτιμος) is very rare and is only used here in the N.T. The word actually means “equally precious, equally valuable, equally honorable” (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 219). Now Peter is writing knowing he is going to die, and he wants every believer to know that those who have believed on Jesus Christ have the same precious, valuable, and honorable faith as that of a dying apostle.

I want us to notice that this does not say anything about the size of their faith or strength of their faith or their attitude in their faith; it stresses the similarity of their faith. Peter simply says that this Epistle is to those who believe, and those who have believed have the same kind of precious faith that he had.

If you are a believer you have the same faith connection to God that the apostles had and this text is for you. You have a rich pedigree and a rich inheritance in your faith. What this practically means is that we will have no excuse if we lived our lives devoted to the lustful and sensual. If we are not serious about the inspired Word of God, we will not be able to blame any but ourselves, for we had the same kind of faith the apostles had.

Observation #3 - They have a “ righteousness ” faith.

I love what one commentator said, it may be our faith but it is God’s righteousness (David Helm, *II Peter*, p. 187). The imputed righteousness of God is the very heart of the Gospel.

This faith was received by or in the righteousness of our God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. In Greek there is one article “the” which sits before God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Granville Sharp rule of Greek says when you have this construction it is referring to the same person that is described by the first noun (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 147).

What this means is that Peter is identifying Jesus Christ as being our Savior and our God . As Peter neared his own death, he was focused in his faith on Jesus Christ and the righteousness he had in Him.

If we have the same kind of faith Peter and the other apostles had, it is a faith that totally trusts in the righteousness of Jesus Christ who is our God and our Savior. Peter had a faith that did not trust in the works of self in any way. Peter was not a perfect man. He had his frailties, failures, and faults just as we do. However, Peter believed the righteousness he had was God's righteousness, which meant it was Christ's righteousness which had been imputed to him.

The like precious faith that we have is a faith that believes the righteousness of God is only found in Jesus Christ by faith. If you believed that Jesus Christ is God and that Jesus Christ is your Savior who can give you the righteousness that makes you right with God, then you have the same kind of honorable and precious faith that the apostles had.

Even though these apostles accomplished some amazing things, they never trusted in their own righteousness but in the righteousness of God found in the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Since our faith is an honorable faith and a righteous faith like that of the apostles, it certainly should never be an immoral faith like that of the false teachers

PREFACE INTRODUCTORY MATTER #3 – The introduction of the greeting . **1:2**

When you first read **verse 2**, it appears to be your average greeting. But upon close examination it is not. There are two critical greeting facts we don't want to miss:

Greeting Fact #1 - Grace and peace may be multiplied to you.

It has been well observed that the Apostle Peter uses mathematical terms in making spiritual points. In **verse 2** he uses the word "multiply."

Now the verb "multiply" (πλαθυνω) is a passive verb which means God must perform the action and we are the recipients of the action. The word means to be multiplied and increased to a full level. The aorist tense of the verb indicates there is a point in time when God authorizes this multiplication. **But the rare thing about this verb is that it is in the Optative Mood.** This mood means that the possibility exists for this to happen. It is very conceivable that God could do this and this was Peter's wish; however, for many it probably would not happen.

Grace is that undeserved, unmerited favor of God which we cannot earn. Peace is the tranquility that we may have in our relationship with God. Peter knows he is going to die and he is as calm as can be. Certainly grace and peace had been multiplied by God and given to Peter, and he hoped the same thing would happen to these believers.

In the context of II Peter, it is a possibility that God can multiply grace and peace to you to the extent that you will have an abundant entrance into heaven and will not get caught up in the lust-crazed views of this world.

It is possible for you to have God so multiply His grace to you that you can spot a false prophet or false teacher immediately. However, the Optative Mood says for many this multiplication of grace and peace will not happen.

Greeting Fact #2 - Grace and peace will be multiplied to you via knowledge .

The only way grace and peace may be multiplied is through a deep knowledge of the Scriptures which gives us knowledge of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The word “knowledge” is one that means deep knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. II Peter is a book that opens by presenting the need for knowledge and it ends the same way (II Peter 3:18).

Growth in one’s relationship with God demands growth in knowledge of God’s Word. But this is not just an intellectual or academic pursuit; this deep knowledge deepens one’s relationship and spirituality with God. Keep in mind that at one time Peter had been a worldly fisherman. He was not some Biblical scholar who was after deep knowledge of the Word of God. But when Jesus Christ got hold of his heart and mind, this became the driving passion of the rest of his life.

There is no question that as Peter nears his death, he realizes more and more the importance of deep knowledge of God’s Word. **Knowledge of God’s Word is critical for faith development and for development in grace and for living a God-honoring life in a godless lust-crazed world.**

The reason why Peter uses the Optative Mood is because it will not be the majority of believers who will go after deep knowledge of God’s Word that will move God to grant them great increase in the grace of God and the peace of God.

Here is the thing; the potential for every believer is that he/she may grow in their knowledge to a depth level of the apostles. This is a very real possibility. As one goes after this objective, God will multiply the grace/peace package.