

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

An Expository Journey Through **2Peter** 1- Introduction

May 10, 2020

2Peter 1:1-3

1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

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

3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Now today, I begin an “Expositional Journey” through the Epistle of **2Peter**. And I want to begin this series of Sermons by defining two words:

- Expository
- Journey

Expositional

To “exposit” something is to explain it. It is to dig deep to reveal the full meaning of it. Expositing give both *depth* and *context* to whatever you are examining. So, to preach “expositionally” is to explain the words; and the verses; and the sentences; and the thoughts; and the paragraphs; and the chapters of a particular Book of the Bible to arrive at the Answer to three Questions:

- What does that verse actually say?
- What does that verse mean by what it says?
- What does Obedience to that verse look like in the 21st Century?

God *could* have revealed His Will to us in pictures- but He didn't. He has revealed His Will to us- in words. And they are very *common* and *ordinary* words. So, even as God chose common and ordinary people (the Apostles)- and *empowered* them to do an extraordinary job- God chose common and ordinary nouns; verbs; pronouns; adjectives; adverbs; and prepositional phrases- and God *empowered* them to reveal to us Divine Truth. So, let's look closely at these three Questions:

1. What Does the Verse Actually Say?

Inherent in trying to find out what a verse or Passage *says*- is in the fact that the Bible is *unique* among all the other books of the world. The Bible makes the claim that it is "Inspired" (2Timothy 3:16&17). And that means that the Scriptures are "God-breathed". And, therefore, *everything* in the Bible- including the fantastic Miracles and supernatural events like Creation- are true.

But Inspiration also carries with it the idea that the Bible *cannot* be wrong. It doesn't possess the ability to be in error (Infallible). Therefore, Scripture is both the "Word of God" and the "Will of God" on the earth. And so, the sacred Scriptures "stand above" or it has the Authority to encourage, commend, correct, rebuke, or condemn any human on earth- even Pastors; Elders; Bishops; and Popes. *Nobody* is above the Bible. And no Statements by any human on earth- regardless of their position- is superior to what God put into the Scriptures.

What the Bible says- *supersedes* all human opinion; tradition; or conclusion. So, it is important for every believer to find out what the Bible actually says. And in that way- we will understand *what* to believe; and *why* we should believe it. And that will bring honor to our dear Lord.

The "Word of God" or A "Word about God"?

Now some large Protestant denominations teach today that the Bible is NOT the "Word of God"- but rather a "Word *about* God". And even though that Statement may sound benign to you- it does great damage to the meaning of the word, "Inspired". For example, as the inspired "Word of God"- we believe and teach that the Universe was created instantly- primarily by the spoken Word of God- in six distinct "evening and morning"

divisions of time called, “days”- somewhere between 10,000 and 6,000 years ago. We also believe and teach that Adam and Eve were real biological creations of God- where Adam was created instantly; and fully grown from the ground; while Eve was created from Adam’s rib- *exactly* as the Book of **Genesis** describes.

We also believe and teach what the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches about Jesus: that He was born of a virgin; lived a perfectly sinless Life; died a vicarious (substitutionary) Death as a Propitiation on the Cross; and physically rose again from the dead (in the same Body in which He died) on the third day. We also believe and teach that Jesus bodily ascended into Heaven; and today sits at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High- interceding for the saints of God. We believe and teach that, at some point in the future- Jesus will bodily *descend* back to this earth and will present to Himself a glorious Church- as the crowning Achievement of all that He has said and done.

But as a “Word *about* God”- they believe and teach that what we know about Science; Medicine; Physics; Biology; and Astronomy today- *dominates* over and above what **Genesis** teaches- and therefore, the Universe *could* well be billions of years old; and Humans *could have* evolved from lower primates. Many of them would discount- not only the historical facts about Who Jesus is; and What Jesus did- but also discount, ignore, or outright deny the other Miracles of the Bible.

So, in their view, the Bible is NOT to be taken as “Divine Truth” that is to be obeyed- but rather as a “Guide” to *assist* us in this life with anecdotes and stories and lessons that are meant to be “inspiring”- sort of like “Aesop’s Fables”. So, as far as I am concerned this makes them, modern day Sadducees.

And I couldn’t disagree more with them. In fact- I categorically *condemn* their view about the Bible as being both “heretical” and “dangerous” to the souls of men. Yet I agree with them that the Bible is *inspiring*. But that is only true because the Bible is Inspired. But that does NOT mean that the Bible is against Science. It isn’t. *Whatever* is true- is of God- for God CANNOT lie. So, those who believe the Bible is true- love *all* Truth. Because, ultimately, *all* Truth is God’s Truth.

But the Reality is that Science is still developing. It is NOT finished or closed. We are still discovering things- every day- that contradict long-held scientific beliefs and statements. So, what Science teaches today- may well be discarded in the future. But the Bible stands- absolutely

uncontested- as the Inspired, Infallible, Inerrant, Authoritative, Relevant, and Sufficient Word of the living God. And our duty- is NOT to challenge or ignore it- but to read and study it- so we may *know* what God has said- so we may *obey* it.

The Biblical Languages

Now I have been faithful to teach you that the 66 Books of the Holy Bible were NOT originally written in English. There are three “Biblical Languages”:

- Ancient Hebrew
- Ancient Aramaic
- Koine Greek

Ancient Hebrew

The Hebrew language that is primarily spoken by rabbis and orthodox Jews today- is NOT the Hebrew in which the majority of the Old Testament was written. The Biblical Hebrew is the ancient language that God sovereignly gave to His people. But *originally*, the language was called, either “Judean” or “the language of Canaan”. For example, **2Kings 18:26** says,

Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, and Shebna and Joah, said to Rabshakeh, “Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak with us in Judean in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.”

... and **Isaiah 19:18** says,

In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the Lord of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.

Ancient Hebrew was gradually reduced to the status of a language of theological learning- until the rise of the Babylonian Empire in the 6th Century BC, when Ancient Aramaic replaced it.

Ancient Aramaic

Ancient Aramaic is what is called a “dead language”. No known nation on earth today has this form of Aramaic as its primary language. It was introduced to Israel during the Babylonian Captivity around the 8th Century BC. Only about 250 verses (out of 23,000) of the Old Testament were written in Aramaic- *primarily* in parts of the Books of **Daniel** and **Ezra**.

After Israel split into two Kingdoms- ancient Hebrew remained the *primary* language of the two Tribes of the *southern* Kingdom; while Aramaic became the primary language of the ten Tribes of the *northern* Kingdom- until the Greek occupation of Israel in about 330BC.

Now as fully God- Jesus could speak and understand every language. But as fully Man- He was raised in Nazareth; and began His Ministry around Galilee- so, Jesus spoke the common language of that region for that day- Aramaic.

Koine Greek

Koine Greek was the language of the “common man” from the 4th Century BC up to around 300AD. It is distinguished from “*Classical Greek*” that was used by the lawyers, doctors; and the educated; and the wealthy. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek- in the years after the Resurrection- while the Old Testament was translated *out* of Hebrew and into Greek during the Greek occupation of the 4th Century BC. The Greek Old Testament was called, the “Septuagint”.

But, in God’s Providence- Koine Greek has two advantages to it:

- It is a very *precise* language
- It was the language of the Mariners

For example, in English we say:

- I “love” macaroni and cheese
- I “love” the Dallas Cowboys
- I “love” my wife
- I “love” my country

- I “love” God

... but in Koine Greek- there are five different words for “Love”- each having different meanings:

- *Agape*- Selfless, Unconditional Love
- *Philia*- Brotherly Friendship
- *Eros*- Sexual Passion
- *Ludus*- Playful Love
- *Philautia*- Love for Self

... there is even a Greek word, “*Storge*” that Paul used twice (**Romans 1:31** and **2Timothy 3:3**) to denote the *absence* of real Love. Yet only two of these Greek words were used in the original autographs of the New Testament: *Agape* and *Philia*.

Now it is commonly thought that “*Agape*” is only used in reference to God. And that is generally true. But the word, “*Agape*” simply means: *selfless and unconditional Love*- and fallen humans have the ability to demonstrate that kind of Love- even in a negative sense. For example, a wicked tax collector could *unconditionally* “Love” (agape) the rough and violent men, whom he hired to violently attack those Jews, who refuse to pay their taxes.

But it is amazing that the New Testament was written in Greek because that was the language of the shipping Industry of that day. And because of that- the Gospel was able to spread very rapidly throughout the “known world”.

Just Ask

Now the very BEST way to understand what a verse or Passage in the Bible actually means- would be to go to the man, who originally wrote it- and just ask him. Because that is all that really matters- what that man had in his mind as God the Holy Spirit “carried him along” to pen down that verse or Passage. What a verse or Passage means to *us*- is *completely* irrelevant. The original writer had something *very specific* in mind- and *that* is why he wrote those particular words down. And so, to simply ask him what he meant would save us all a lot of time. The problem

we run into, of course- is that all of the writers of Scripture are dead. And so, we CAN'T ask them what they meant.

Now some, in the modern Church, teach that since we cannot go directly to the actual *writer* of Scripture- we should go directly to the *Author*: God the Holy Spirit. So, these people teach that we don't have to *study* the Bible and agonize over the words- that all we need to do is to *ask* the Holy Spirit- and He will gladly tell us what He meant for the writer to say.

The problem with this- is in trying to discern between what God the Holy Spirit might say about a verse; and what our own subjective mind tells us. The notion that anyone has the capacity to "put his mind on hold" and hear directly from God today- is both "arrogant" and "dangerous."

It is arrogant because God has already given us His Revelation in words that mean certain things. And men, "carried along" by God the Holy Spirit wrote those particular words down for us on the pages of the Holy Bible. And that was one of the most important things that God the Holy Spirit has ever done.

So, to *ignore* what has already been written down- the precise and particular words that already mean certain things- and to attempt to by-pass that and receive another meaning directly from God- is to say that what God "carried" these men along to write down- wasn't good enough- and we need something else.

But it is also dangerous- because this is EXACTLY what every single originator of all of the heresies; and all of the cults; and all of the false Teachings; and all of the false religions said God was doing with them. So, even though these false Teachers don't agree together about hardly *anything else*- all of them agree on one thing: The Bible is either completely wrong (and they must write the "correct" book); or the existing Bible MUST be interpreted ONLY by *their* direct Revelation.

But the irrefutable Proof that humans today do NOT hear the full and correct meaning of Scripture by "direct Revelation" rather than by studying- is in the fact that if these people were actually hearing directly from God the Holy Spirit what a verse or Passage meant- they would NEVER be wrong. They would NEVER be inaccurate. And yet they are! All the time! And *sometimes*- they are very wrong- about very serious Subjects!

But even beyond that- we are *commanded* to "be diligent" (Study) with the Scriptures so that we may,

2Timothy 2:15b

... present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

... which is why one of the “Ministry Gifts” to the Church- is that of Teachers. So, even though somebody saying they hear directly from God about what a verse means may *sound* very spiritual- it actually only reveals how lazy they are. Because studying the Bible is real hard work- if you do it correctly.

Illumination not Merely Human Knowledge

But we must also remember that, as we study- the Words of the Bible must be “revealed” to us NOT merely “learned”. Now that does NOT mean that the Holy Spirit will reveal something to us that contradicts what the words of the Bible actually mean. He won’t. But as we study- we should pray that God will help us “get the Gospel right” and, using all of the tools that God has provided through Common Grace (like Dictionaries, Commentaries, Concordances, Software, and Lexicons)- we should humbly beg God to guide us arrive at the one single Meaning of every word that God breathed.

Context; Context; Context

So, even though we can’t walk up to a Bible writer and ask him what he meant- we aren’t defeated. Because we have the NEXT best thing: *the actual Words that they wrote down*. So, the NEXT best way for us to arrive at what a verse actually *says*- is to carefully *examine* the words themselves- and then go about doing what our eighth grade English teachers taught us:

- Diagram the sentences (in the original languages)
- Conjugate the verbs (to arrive at their proper usage)
- Use the “grammatical rules” of either the Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic

... and we have three choices of how to do all of this:

- We can trust what other people teach us- who have proven to be trustworthy (GOOD)
- We can use software that does all of this for us (BETTER)

- We can go to school and learn the Biblical Languages (BEST)

But by carefully *examining* the Words that the writer originally wrote down (in the original language); and by paying close attention to the tense of the verbs- we can arrive at a very good and trustworthy understanding of what a particular verse or Passage actually says. And my promise to you- is that I will do this as we “journey” through **2Peter**.

2. What the Verse Means by What It Says

Many times, we don't literally *mean* what we say. For example, for somebody to say, “*It's raining cats and dogs!*” does NOT mean that cats and dogs are literally falling out of the sky. We simply mean that it is raining very hard. Or when we say, “*That only happens once in a blue moon.*”, we are NOT meaning that the moon periodically turns blue- but that the event happens very rarely.

So, when the Bible refers to, “**the four corners of the earth**”-eighteen different times- we should NOT think that the Biblical writers thought the earth was square (or flat)- but only that they were referring to North; South; East; and West. Also, when Dr. Luke said that “**All Judea**” turned out; or heard the Good News- he was NOT meaning every single person, who lived in that region- but simply a “lot of people” or a “majority of the people” came to hear Jesus; or received the Gospel. In **1John 3:6**, the Apostle said,

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

... but John was NOT teaching that saved people reach a place of sinless Perfection in this life; and on this earth- even though that is *exactly* how it looks in English. But by examining this verse in the original Greek- we know that John was teaching that “**abiding in Jesus**” prevents us from living *continuously* in “*unrepentant Sin*”. Likewise, when Peter said,

2Peter 1:10

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble

... he was NOT teaching that saved people, *who do the things that Peter teaches*, will *never* make mistakes; or will *never* sin. He meant they will not *ultimately* stumble- to the point of losing their Salvation.

Most of the times, the way to comprehend what a verse actually means- is by looking closely at the tense of the verbs; and the over-all general “context” of the entire Passage. So, in Real-Estate only three things matter: *Location; Location; Location*. And in Biblical Comprehension- only three things matter: *Context; Context; Context*.

The Role of Theology

It also helps to already have a good, solid, biblical Theology in place- BEFORE you attempt to understand a particular verse- *especially* difficult ones. For example, when the writer of **Hebrews** said,

Hebrew 10:14

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

... it may look as though these people have *already been* “perfected” and “sanctified.” And this is *exactly* how the “Roman religious system” teaches this Passage. However, from a biblical Theology we already know that Sanctification is NOT a single “event” (like Justification), but a life-long “Process” and that it is “progressive.” So, from already having a correct Theology- we understand that, even though we *might* be able to comprehend the Passage that way- we don’t. And we don’t because that would be entirely *contradictory* to what we already know to be true- from *other* verses and Passages.

So, the best understanding of what this verse actually means- is through the correct Context of the entire Book of **Hebrews**- that this unknown writer was showing his first Century Jewish audience yet another way in which the New Covenant is superior to the Old. And he was doing that by teaching that the “once for all” Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross- saved all of God’s chosen people- forever! And the writer was simply using the Greek word for “perfection” to refer to Salvation in this case. And we should understand the *last* part of this verse as meaning,

... He has perfected for all time those who are [being] sanctified

3. What does Obedience to that Verse Look Like in the 21st Century?

This is called, "Application"- and it is a very important part of how we should relate to the Truth of Scripture in our day. Because the overall Goal of *why* God saved us (and why God leaves us on earth after we are saved)- is so that we will display the Glory of God's Grace by finding the fullness of our own Joy- through our humble Obedience to whatever God commands. In **Ephesians 2:10**- the Apostle Paul said,

... we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

... so, after we have understood the correct meaning of the Scriptures- we then need to try to *apply* this Divine Truth to our lives. In **John 14:15**, Jesus Himself said,

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

... so, our Obedience to what Jesus said- *proves* that our love for Him is NOT merely words we say in Church- but that it is true. Without striving to obey- we prove that we really don't value Who Jesus is; or appreciate what He has done on our behalf. So, loving Jesus means loving what He said; and Who He is; and What He has done- MORE than we love anything else- including our own lives.

Yet we don't wear robes anymore; or ride donkeys; or walk from city to city. And we don't normally pray on our roof tops; or have a basin of water at our front door so we may wash the feet of our guests. We use technology; and we fly on airplanes; and we send E-mails across the world in mere seconds. And we live in a Constitutional Republic- that guarantees (better than any other nation) certain "unalienable Rights". So, what do ancient laws and statements by long dead men have to do with us?

The Bible doesn't teach us how to build a bridge; or how to wire our homes; or how to set up our voice mail; or how to set the clocks on our microwave ovens that blink 12:00- without stopping. But the Bible DOES tell us:

- Who God is
- Who we are

- What Righteousness is
- What is wrong with us
- What Sin is
- How to fix us
- What pleases God
- How to glorify God
- How to go to Heaven

... which is infinitely *better* than what Government; Technology; Medicine; Psychology; Psychiatry; or Sociology can teach us. But the Bible goes on to tell us...

- How to raise our children
- How to relate to Money and Government
- Why God created us uniquely Male and Female
- How to set up and organize and operate within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church

... and the Bible teaches that all five groups of people in the Church:

- Old Men (60 years old and over)
- Old Women
- Young Men
- Young Women
- Slaves/Servants/Employees

... all have *unique* Roles to play in this life and on this earth. And the Bible tells us how we are to *fill* those “God-ordained Roles”. And God used the Apostle Paul to tell us *why* every saved person should strive to “be” and to “do” what God has called them to “be” and to “do”:

Titus 2:5b

... so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Titus 2:8b

... so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about

us.

Titus 2:10b

... so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

So, Application is very important- because as we struggle, against the lusts of our flesh, to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture, in our daily life- all to the Glory of God- God sees our struggle. And He knows that we are but flesh. But the fact that we so value what God has said enough that we are willing to struggle to obey it- brings Glory to God- even if our Obedience may be flawed or imperfect.

So, as we journey through the Epistle of **2Peter**- we will come across some very sweet and precious verses. And those verses will be easy to teach; and easy to learn; and easy to obey. But we will also come across some verses that are hard to teach and hard to learn and that will require some sacrifice from us- if we hope to obey them. And Salvation doesn't change that. But what experiencing the Miracle of the New Birth DOES do is to make the sacrifice to obey- *worthwhile*.

But while Application is important- it is NOT the most important thing. Because honestly striving to apply the Divine Truth of Scripture- to our daily lives- *automatically* flows out from the heart that has already experienced new spiritual Life in Regeneration. So, we may know them by their fruits. No human can live- long term- contrary to what he already believes. And so, "Right Believing" (Orthodoxy) always leads to "Right Living" (Orthopraxy).

But our own unique circumstances mean that while there is only one, single, correct *Meaning* of every verse in the Bible- there may be literally *hundreds* of different Applications to that one verse in the lives of God's people.

So, Application is the Fruit of understanding what God has said. But until we *understand* what God has said- and then genuinely *love* what God has said- *none* of our Application honors God. You see, it is possible for a person to apply *some* of the Truths of Scripture to his life- *without* being saved. So, that individual may outwardly live a very moral (biblical) life- yet not care one whit about Jesus. But that kind of Application is completely *worthless*- in an *eternal* sense- because it *dishonors* the Savior while contributing to make the individual more and more Self-righteous and Arrogant.

So, our Application MUST flow out from a heart that genuinely *adores*

Jesus; and that genuinely sees Him as the Treasure of the Universe. And when that happens- the individual will NOT see the Commandments of God as being “burdensome”- but he will actually *enjoy* the straight and narrow Path. And that soul will find the fullness of his *own* Joy- in humbling himself to the Authority of Scripture. And that is what I mean by all of the Sermons in this series on **2Peter** being “Expositional”.

A “Journey”

But what do I mean when I say that this Sermon Series will be a “Journey”? I mean that our time in **2Peter** will be “meaningful”- rather than “common.” For example, when you go to the store every week- the trip that you make becomes “common” in that you do it all the time. The scenery is the same; and you can almost drive it- while thinking about other things.

But a Journey is *unique*- precisely because it is *rare*. You may travel many times during the week- to the store; or to the doctor; or to a friend’s house. But you may go years without taking a Journey to a place you have never been before. But because it is *unique*- you will *remember* that Journey; and the details of that Journey will remain vivid in your mind- even years later. And *that* is why I call this Sermon Series a “Journey”.

Simon Peter

Okay, so what about Peter? When we last left the Apostle at the end of **1Peter 5:14** (June 2, 2019)- he had just finished writing five inspired Chapters to the “Scattered Aliens” of his day. So, Peter wrote his *first* Epistle to those who were *forcibly* removed from their homes and cities and even their livelihood; and who were *forced* to live as refugees- precisely because they were Christians.

And so, the *primary* theme of **1Peter** is “*Why do the Godly Suffer?*” So, **1Peter** is a *wonderful* Book to teach us *how* Christians are supposed to suffer- to God’s Glory.

But **2Peter** is more *theological*; and contains different themes throughout its sixty-one verses. For example, after his Introduction- Chapter 1 teaches saved people how we may...

... become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is

in the world by lust. (2 Peter 1:4b)

Chapter 2 is almost *identical* to the Book of **Jude** in its Warnings against false Teachers. And he ends it by saying,

2Peter 2:21&22

For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A *DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT*," and, "A sow, after washing, *returns to wallowing in the mire*."

But Chapter 3 is very interesting. In that Chapter- Peter gets into the very important Issue of "*Why does a Good and Sovereign God allow Evil to continue in the World? Why doesn't God stop it?*" And Peter answers that Question in a verse that is probably one of the most *misquoted, misused, and misunderstood* verses in the entire Bible:

2Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. ... and in this Journey- we will spend time with this verse. And then after a brief Statement about how this world will end- the Apostle *completes* this powerful Epistle by saying,

2Peter 3:17&18

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Now Peter wrote his *first* inspired "Letter" or "Epistle" around the year 64AD. As you may remember, the Roman Emperor, Nero set the city of Rome on fire and then blamed the Christians. And the Great Persecution that rose up against them caused believers in Jesus to be scattered all across the Gentile world.

But unlike most every other Refugee Crisis- Peter did NOT think that food, water, shelter, clothing, and medicine were the main things that God's

people needed. And so, he spent very little time addressing any of those things. Peter's *primary* concern for the scattered Flock of God- was that they remain Faithful; Fruitful; and Busy in the Work of the Lord.

And so, Peter taught them strange sounding Doctrines about the fact that God had sovereignly *allowed* them to suffer; but that their Suffering was NOT designed for them to merely hurt- but so that they might prove beyond any shadow of a doubt two things:

- Jesus is better than anything this world can give to them
- Jesus is better than anything this world can take away from them

And so, Peter walked among the Alien outcasts of his day- *imploring* them to keep their eyes on Jesus; and to not allow their present situation to cause them to grow weak and disillusioned.

On June 9, 68AD, the maniacal Emperor committed suicide; and the intense Persecution that scattered the believers all over the place- ended- at least temporarily. But the Testimony that these saints had in how they lived their lives- even under such horrendous persecution- was circulating all across the Roman Empire- giving even more Glory to God.

But at some point *before* Nero killed himself; but *after* he had written his *first* Book- Peter was "carried along" by God the Holy Spirit to pen down this *second* inspired "Letter" or Epistle. And the tenor and tone of *this* Epistle is completely different from the first- so much so- that many scholars have suggested that Peter didn't even write it.

Now it is clear from the body of New Testament Truth that Peter may have been illiterate his entire life. So, the Apostle *may* have used a scribe to pen down words that were either dictated to him directly by Peter; or that he had heard from Peter at some point. It could have also been that Peter may have dictated this Epistle while in prison in Rome awaiting his execution at the hands of Nero. It is also possible that both Peter and Paul were in prison in Rome *together* (at least for a while) and that Nero had them *both* killed- thinking that the execution of these two great spiritual giants would stop the spread of Christianity once and for all.

This is why Nero was thought by many (both then and now) to be the "Man of Lawlessness" of **2Thessalonians 2:3**- and the "Beast" of **The Revelation 13**- who institutes the "Mark of the Beast" (666). But we can't state that dogmatically. What we *do* know to be true- is that Nero was a real bad man, who tried to stamp out Christianity by having their two most

famous Leaders killed.

But **1&2Peter** show us that Peter understood a fundamental Truth about Suffering on the one hand; and false Teaching on the other:

External Persecution does NOT disillusion believers; and does NOT hinder the lost from being saved

If anything, History proves just the opposite. Being beaten or jailed or even martyred for Christ is an *honor* to genuine believers- because Salvation *removes* the fear of death. The writer of **Hebrews** taught,

Hebrews 2:14&15

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He [Jesus] Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

So, *external* Hardships against the Church do NOT keep lost people from being saved. That isn't true. Neither does Persecution cause genuinely saved people to run and hide. What causes lost people to stay away from the Church- is NOT Persecution- but Hypocrisy and false Teaching **IN** the Church.

When the people of the Church don't live Holy- when there is no difference between the way pagans live and those who are supposedly saved- the people of the world lose respect for the Church. And when that happens- lost people will turn to Government; Technology; Medicine; the god of Self; or anything besides the Church to help them handle the problems of this life.

And when false Teaching runs rampant and is not confronted and defeated- those **IN** the Church become *disillusioned* and *demoralized*. For over 2,000 years- saints have gone to their deaths- even very painful deaths- with praises on their lips. The collective Testimony throughout the History of the Church is that the spread of Christianity throughout the world has been paved with the blood of martyrs. Twelve year- old girls; and pregnant women; and blind and crippled men stood boldly and unafraid and unashamed against kings; and tyrants; and evil men. They defended the Biblical Gospel- even when threatened with certain annihilation. And as they were thrown to the lions; had their heads cut off; or were burned at the

stake- these faithful saints sang praises to God- rejoicing that they had the privilege of suffering for the Sake of Jesus.

But the Confusion and the Contradictions that are inherent in false Teaching- silences the praises of God's people. As the people of God are misled or deceived- they shrink back; they grow silent; and they become cold; and lifeless; and afraid. But God is faithful to periodically raise up men- who call the Church to repentance; and a return to Biblical Purity.

Another great enemy of the Church is the Curse of Worldliness. And Worldliness exists whenever the trinkets and shiny objects of this fallen world become more precious than the One, Who lived and died and rose again. Jesus Himself said in **Mark 4:19** that three things:

- **The “worries of the world”**
- **The “deceitfulness of riches”**
- **The “desires for other things”**

... have the power to literally “choke the Word of God” until the Word itself becomes “unfruitful” in their lives. This is the insidious Curse of Worldliness. Ian Murray, the Editor of *Banner of Truth* defined Worldliness like this:

“Worldliness is departing from God. It is a Man-centered way of thinking; it proposes objectives which demand no radical breach with Man's fallen nature; it judges the importance of things by the present and material results; it weighs success by numbers; it covets human Esteem and wants no unpopularity; it knows no Truth for which it is worth suffering; it declines to be a ‘fool for Christ's Sake’. Worldliness is the mind-set of the unregenerate. It adopts idols. And it is at war with God.”

... Murray went on to explain:

“Because ‘the flesh’ still dwells in the Christian he is far from immune from being influenced by this dynamic. It is said of believers, **‘the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to another’** (**Galatians 5:17**). It is professing Christians who are asked, **‘Do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?’** (**James 4:4**) and are commanded, **‘Do not love the world’**, and **‘keep**

yourselves from idols’ (1 John 2:15, 5:21). Apostasy generally arises in the Church just because this Danger ceases to be observed...the Church devises ways to present the Gospel which will neutralize any Offence. The antithesis between Regenerate and Unregenerate is passed over and it is supposed that the interests and ambitions of the unconverted can somehow be harnessed to win their Approval for Christ. Then when this approach achieves ‘results’ – as it will – no more Justification is thought to be needed. The Rule of Scripture has given place to Pragmatism. The apostolic Statement, **‘For if I still pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ’ (Galatians 1:10),** has lost its meaning. . . .That this has happened on a large scale in the later-twentieth Century is to be seen in the way in which the interests and priorities of contemporary Culture have come to be mirrored in the churches....Instead of the churches revolutionizing the culture, the reverse has happened. Churches have been converted to the world.”

Peter understood the horror of all three problems IN the Church:

- Blatant Sin
- False Teaching
- Worldliness

... and so, as the Great Persecution came to an end- this Apostle saw the need to write this *second* Epistle to encourage believers both then and now- to

... be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2Peter 3:17b&18a)

Now according to the “Roman religious system”- Peter was the first Bishop of the Church in Rome. And, according to them, that makes Peter to be the first Pope. Also, according to them, Peter was the “Rock” on which the entire Christian Church is being built. Yet there is no biblical proof that Peter was ever in the Ministry of the Church at Rome- to *any* extent!

Around 58AD, Paul wrote, what I consider to be, the most amazing and most important Book ever written- **Romans**. And at the end, in Chapter 16- Paul mentions several people, who were in and around the Church at

Rome. Yet Peter's name is missing. So, if Peter was the Pastor; or even just a Leader of that Church- Paul would have been insulting him by not even mentioning his name.

But what we *do* know to be true- is that Peter was personally chosen by Jesus (**Mark 1:17**); called to be an Apostle (**Luke 6:13**); that he was the Leader (protos) of the Apostles (**Luke 6:14**); that he walked on water (**Matthew 14:28**); and saw Jesus transfigured in His Glory (**Matthew 17:2**).

We also know that Peter betrayed the Lord three times (**Luke 22:61**); and later repented (**Luke 22:32**). We also know that Peter was "clothed with Power from on High" in the Upper Room (**Luke 24:49**); and that he preached the first Sermon of the Christian Church (**The Acts 2**). Peter was also used by God to heal a cripple man (**The Acts 3:6**); and God gave Divine Credibility to the Revelation of the New Covenant by allowing people to be healed when Peter's shadow passed over them (**The Acts 5:15**). So, Peter was an amazing man- an unworthy sinner- who had been saved by God's glorious Grace.

And we also know that God the Holy Spirit "carried him along" to pen down two amazing and true Epistles. And we have already examined the *first* one- and I can't wait to get into the *second* one, so we may join with Peter and say,

2Peter 3:18b

... To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2020 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of Sermons taken from a verse by verse "journey" through the **Epistle of 2Peter**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

