

XIV. Peter Squared

March 15/17/18, 2021

2 Peter 1:1-2

Aim: To introduce the letter of 2 Peter, and to recognize the importance of growing in grace and the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.

MacArthur: Second Peter (along with Jude) is viewed by some as the ‘dark corner’ of the New Testament. As a result, it is not often preached, studied, discussed, or quoted. The book is even neglected in scholarly circles, where critics dismiss it as a pseudonymous (forged) letter, unworthy of serious study. But the church of Jesus Christ ignores this epistle at its peril. After all, Peter wrote it to help believers face a world filled with subtle spiritual deception. Knowing that his death was imminent (:14), the apostle wanted to remind his readers of the truths he had already taught them (v. 15). Peter also knew that the deadly threat of false teachers loomed large on the horizon; he wanted to expose the apostates in order to expel their demon doctrines from the church.

Sproul: It has been said that 2 Peter is the forgotten stepchild of the New Testament. There perhaps have been fewer commentaries written about this book than any other of the New Testament, with the possible exception of Jude.

Gardner: The first verse of this book reminds us that it was written as a letter. It follows a standard form of opening which is found in several other New Testament letters. It indicates who wrote the letter and his role, then it briefly identifies the people who received the letter and their position as members of the Christian church. The greeting then follows in verse 2.

Moo: Second Peter opens with those elements that we would expect to find at the beginning of a letter and which, in fact, are typical of the openings of New Testament letters: 1) an identification of the writer of the letter; 2) an identification of the recipients of the letter; and 3) an introductory greeting.

A. Author (2 Peter 1:1a)

¹Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ...

1. Describing Peter

a) Biography

MacArthur: Peter was the acknowledged leader and spokesman of the Twelve; as such, his name heads all four New Testament lists of the Twelve (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Lk. 6:13-16; Acts 1:13). Along with his brother Andrew (who introduced him to Jesus [Jn. 1:40-42]), he ran a fishing business on the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 4:18; Lk. 5:1-3). The two brothers were originally from the village of Bethsaida (Jn. 1:44), but later moved to the larger nearby town of Capernaum (Mk. 1:21, 29). Their business was a successful one, as evidenced by the spacious house they owned in Capernaum (Mk. 1:29, 32-33; Lk. 4:38). We know that Peter was married, because Jesus healed his mother-in-law (Lk. 4:38-39), and his wife accompanied him on his missionary travels (1 Cor. 9:5).

MacArthur: Peter’s full name was Simon Barjona (Mt. 16:17), literally ‘Simon son of Jonas’ (or John; cp. Jn. 1:42). Simon was a common name in first-century Palestine (there are eight other

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Simons mentioned in the New Testament)... At their first meeting, Jesus named him Cephas (Jn. 1:42; cp. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14) which is Aramaic for ‘rock’; Peter is its Greek equivalent (Jn. 1:42). On occasion, Peter is called ‘Simon’ in secular or neutral settings (e.g., in reference to his house [Mk. 1:29; Lk. 4:38], his mother-in-law [Mk. 1:30; Lk. 4:38], or his business [Lk. 5:3, 10]). At such times, the use of the name had no spiritual implications. More often, however, he is referred to as ‘Simon’ to mark the key failures in his life—those times when he was acting like his unregenerate self (Mt. 17:24-25; Mk. 14:37; Lk. 5:4-8; Lk. 22:31; Jn. 21:15-17).

Moo: Simon was one of the first apostles called by Jesus to follow Him (Mk. 1:16-18 and parallels; cp. Jn. 1:40-42). Along with James and John, he seems to have been part of the ‘inner circle’ of apostles (see Mk. 5:37 and parallels; 9:2 and parallels). It was Simon who was led by God to recognize that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and as a result, Jesus Himself designated Simon ‘Peter’ (meaning rock) (Mt. 16:13-18; cp. Jn. 1:42). Simon Peter comes both to typify the apostles and to stand out as their leader. His denials of Jesus before the cross and resurrection revealed the unavoidable weakness of Jesus’ followers before the coming of the Spirit, and his bold proclamation of Christ in Jerusalem after Pentecost put him in the front rank of early Christian leaders (see Acts 2-5). Persecution eventually forces Peter to flee Jerusalem (12:17), although he returns for the Apostolic Council a few years later (ch. 15). Subsequent references to Peter in the New Testament are few, though he seems to have spent some time in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 1:12; 9:5; the ‘Cephas’ in these verses is a transliteration of the Aramaic word for ‘rock’ and is thus equivalent to ‘Peter’—Gk. *petros*).

MacArthur: [At Pentecost], the Holy Spirit descended on Peter and the rest of the apostles, and from then on the “Rock” lived up to his name. He took the lead in finding a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26), fearlessly preached the gospel (2:14-40; 3:12-26), performed miraculous healings (3:1-9; 5:12-16), boldly confronted the Jewish authorities (4:8-20), unhesitatingly disciplined sinning church members (5:1-11), and zealously denounced false teachers (Acts 8:20). Moreover, it was through Peter’s ministry that the doors of the church were thrown open to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18).

MacArthur: After his appearance at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7-12), Peter all but disappeared from the historical record of the New Testament until he wrote his epistles. Paul alluded to Peter’s missionary travels in 1 Corinthians 9:5, but the extent of those travels is not known. Nonetheless, the Scriptures indicate that he visited Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21), and probably traveled to Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12) and throughout Asia Minor (cp. 1 Pe. 1:1). According to tradition, Peter perished in Rome, as did Paul, during Nero’s persecution.

Moo: About AD 60, Peter seems to have been in Rome; and from here he wrote a letter to Christians in northern Asia Minor—our canonical 1 Peter. We have only later legends to go by in reconstructing the last years of the apostle. But in addition to 1 Peter, we have evidence that Peter ministered for a time in Rome (Eusebius)... Early and, it seems, generally reliable tradition has it that Peter perished, with Paul in the persecution of the Emperor Nero in Rome (64-65 AD). But the tradition that Peter was crucified head downward is late and unreliable.

b) Name

Simeon Peter...

Gardner: The author is the apostle Peter. In the Greek here we read ‘*Simeon*’ *Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ*. Simeon was a literal transliteration of the Hebrew name meaning

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‘hearing’—a name linked to Samuel (‘God has heard’). Given that most people would have used the name of ‘Simon,’ the mention of ‘Simeon’ is another indication that Peter himself was the author, using his original Palestinian name.

Moo: When we turn to the book of the Bible we call 2 Peter, we find an immediate claim about that book: that it was written by *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ*. Few readers of the New Testament would fail to recognize that name.... Double names like *Simon Peter* were common in the ancient Near East. Many people used both the name they were given in their native language and a Greek name, since Greek was so widely spoken. [DSB: not dissimilar from today, where many Chinese have a Chinese name and an ‘English name’.] Thus *Simon*, one of the most common Jewish names at that time, comes from the Hebrew, while *Peter* comes from the Greek. This double name is frequently used in the New Testament. But only here and in Acts 15:14 is the name *Simon* spelled the way it is here (*Symeon* in place of the usual *Simon*, note the RSV, NRSV, REB, and NJB spelling ‘Simeon’). This form of the name is a fairly exact transliteration of the Hebrew, and since it is so rare, we would not expect someone writing in Peter’s name to use it. But it makes perfectly good sense for Peter himself to spell it this way, since it would have been the form natural to him from birth.

MacArthur: *Simon*, the Greek form of the Hebrew ‘Simeon,’ the father of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, was a common Jewish name (cp. Mt. 13:55; 26:6; 27:32; Acts 1:13; 8:9; 9:43). *Peter* is from a Greek word that means ‘rock’ (Cephas is its Aramaic equivalent’ see Jn. 1:42; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9; 11; 14). The apostle used both names to ensure that the letter’s recipients knew exactly whom it was from.

Sproul: In the Greek, the name Peter gives for himself is not Simon Peter but *Simeon Peter*. The name Simeon was one of the most common first names of Aramaic-speaking people in the ancient world, and it is the Aramaic form of the name Simon. Nevertheless, some doubt that the Apostle Peter wrote the epistle since the author calls himself Simeon Peter instead of Simon Peter.

Helm: The letter introduces the author in a unique way, with two names and two titles. He is called *Simeon Peter*. *Simeon* is merely the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name. It was the name given to Jacob’s second son. It was also the name that Jesus’ great disciple was given at birth. *Peter*, however, is not Hebrew in origin but Greek. It means ‘rock.’ As such, it is the name the Lord gave to His valiant and determined follower years later. Using both names is to change from what we find in 1 Peter. There Simeon, the birth name, is not used. We simply meet one called Peter. The alteration in the letter before us is not without subtle intention. 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. Using both names conveys the life experience of one who isn’t afraid to wed together ‘the man as I was born’ and ‘I am the man I am today because of the gracious influence of Jesus.’ ... We are studying a letter that claims a ‘before and after’ kind of person as its author. He is not trying to hide his beginnings. Here is a real man, flesh and all.

c) *Self-Description*

...a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ...

Helm: The two titles used to describe him are *servant* and *apostle of Jesus Christ*. By this he wants the readers to know that in the end, he both served *and* led the church for Christ. By

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putting the names and titles together in the opening line of our text, we have a man who knows the fullness of guilt and grace. We are going to learn from one who was called to bear weight as well as witness for Christ.

(1) Servant

Gardner: Peter reminds his readers of his authority as he writes. He is a *servant and apostle of Jesus Christ*. The word *servant* is *doulos* in Greek, which can mean slave. The link of the word directly with the title *apostle* reminds us of the opening of a number of Paul's letters (e.g., Rom. 1:1). Of course, in one sense Peter is identifying with all Christians who wish to serve their Lord and Master after coming to faith. All Christians of that day and age would have known about slavery and many would have been slaves. The word would therefore have reminded them of the demands laid on them to serve Christ whole-heartedly and in every area of their life. However, for Peter, the two words together were probably a specific claim to apostolic authority.

Moo: In calling himself a *servant...of Jesus Christ*, Peter is, of course, conveying his sense of humility in relationship to his Lord. The word translated *servant* is not the Greek *diakonos*, the 'household servant,' but *doulos*, which can also be translated 'slave.' It is not Peter, in himself, who possesses any particular authority; his authority stems entirely from the master whom he serves. But the title *servant* also carries with it a sense of honor. Great figures in Israel's past had similarly been called 'servants' of God—especially Moses (e.g., Jos. 14:7; 2 Kgs. 18:12) and David (e.g., Ps. 18:1; Ez. 34:23). Naming himself a *servant*, therefore, also conveys to his audience that Peter is claiming to stand in the line of these significant figures in Israel's religious history.

MacArthur: Identifying himself as a *bond-servant*, Peter humbly and gratefully placed himself in the position of submission, duty and obedience. Some of the greatest leaders in the history of redemption bore the title *servant* (e.g., Moses, Dt. 34:5; Ps. 105:26; Mal. 4:4; Joshua, Jos. 24:29; David, 2 Sam. 3:19; Ps. 78:70; all the prophets, Jer. 44:4; Amos 3:7; Paul, Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1; James, James 1:1; Jude, Jude 1), and it eventually became a designation suitable for every believer (cp. 1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:24). In Peter's day, to willingly call oneself a *bond-servant* (*doulos*, 'slave') was to severely lower oneself in a culture where slaves were considered no better than animals. Whereas that practice may have been demeaning socially, it was honorable spiritually. It was to acknowledge that one was duty bound to obey his master, no matter what the cost.

Sproul: As the Apostle Paul frequently identified himself in his letters, so Peter identifies himself here with a twin appellation; namely that he is a *bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ*. In the Christian community, the lowest possible layer or stratification of society was that of a slave, and the most elevated office, save for the office of Jesus Himself, was that of Apostle.... Here Peter claims the highest authority that anyone could claim in the early church—that of being an Apostle. At the same time, like the Apostle Paul, he identifies himself as a slave. He is simultaneously the highest and lowest of Christian society. The word Peter uses here, *doulos*, is the same word that Paul uses in Romans: it refers to a purchased slave.... Peter and Paul saw themselves as slaves of Christ, and that idea extends to everyone purchased by Jesus. We are all bondservants of Christ.... Those who are delivered from the slavery of sin take on a new kind of slavery; they become slaves to Christ.

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(2) Apostle

Gardner: In the Old Testament, the title ‘servant of the Lord’ carried great significance, because it had been specially applied to the ‘greats’ of the faith, people like Abraham, Moses, and David. Peter thus linked himself to the line of those who were called by God to have foundational ministries among his people. The word *apostle* confirms this claim to authority. (The word *apostle* means ‘messenger’ and is the name given to the special twelve disciples chosen by Jesus. Later, the apostle Paul was added to this special number. The fact that the apostles were eye-witnesses of Jesus gave their message a unique authority. They were God’s choice—e.g., Luke 6:12-13—and appointed by Him as ‘servants of the word; Lk. 1:2. In their ministries, therefore, they carried the authority to be speaking from and for God in the way the prophets had spoken in the Old Testament. Though many go out as messengers of the gospel even today, the ministry of these apostles was unique in its authority and foundational status.)

Moo: Peter’s right to speak authoritatively to these Christians is emphasized even more clearly in the second title, *apostle*. This word (Greek *Apostolos*) can mean simply ‘messenger’ and is so used occasionally in the New Testament (e.g., 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). But the word more often has a technical sense, denoting those men chosen specially by the Lord to be His authoritative representatives. They form, as Paul puts it, along with the prophets, ‘the foundation’ of the church (Eph. 2:20). They were commissioned not only to proclaim the good news but also to develop and guarantee the truth of the gospel message. Peter, of course, was one of the most famous of the apostles. He, along with James and John, formed a kind of ‘inner circle’ among the Twelve (see Mk. 5:37; 9:2; 14:33). Peter was the outstanding spokesperson for the Christian message in the early days of the church, as Luke makes clear in Acts 2-12. Being an apostle gave Peter the right to tell these Christians—and us!—what they should believe and how they should live.

MacArthur: Although Peter viewed himself humbly as a bond-servant, he also represented himself notably as an *apostle of Jesus Christ*, one officially sent forth by Christ Himself as a divinely commissioned witness of the resurrected Lord with authority to proclaim His truth. Peter, in presenting himself in these terms, sets a pattern for all in spiritual leadership; the submissive, sacrificial anonymity of a slave, combined with the dignity, significance, and authority of an apostle.

2. Defending Peter

a) *Denying Peter’s Authorship*

Moo: Why is it, then, that a quick survey of recent commentaries reveals that more than half of them do not think that the apostle Peter wrote this letter? Scholars cite six main reasons. 1) The letter is filled with language and concepts drawn from the Hellenistic world. 2) The false teaching combatted in the letter is second-century Gnosticism. 3) The letter’s assumption that the letters of Paul were part of Scripture (cp. 3:15-16) was not possible in the lifetime of the apostles. 4) References to apostolic tradition (cp. 3:2, 16) betray a late date, when there was a fixed ecclesiastical authority (what some scholars have labeled ‘early Catholicism’). 5) The early church expressed a lot of doubts about whether 2 Peter should be accepted into the canon. 6) The letter takes the form of a ‘testament,’ in which a person would write in the name of a great hero of the faith after that hero’s death.

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Gardner: The main reasons given against Peter’s authorship are usually that: a) the language is too ‘Hellenized’ for a Jewish fisherman to have written; b) 1 Peter and 2 Peter are too different in style and content to be by the same author; c) the letter would appear to have been written later than the mid-sixties AD when Peter was put to death by Nero. One reason given for this is that it refers to Paul’s letters as Scripture. Another reason for not regarding this as truly from Peter looks to the so-called ‘genre’ of the letter which is regarded as a ‘testament.’ Nevertheless, none of these arguments is particularly persuasive.

MacArthur: They insist that it was written decades after the apostle’s death by someone claiming to be Peter. To support their rejection of the letter’s authenticity, critics advance several arguments. First, they note that the early church was slow to accept 2 Peter as part of the canon of Scripture. The first person to explicitly state that Peter wrote it was Origen, early in the third century.... Critics also point out several alleged historical problems that, they claim, indicate the epistle could not have been written in Peter’s lifetime. First, they maintain that the reference to Paul’s letters (3:15-16) reflects a time when those letters had been collected and recognized as Scripture. That, they argue, did not happen until long after Peter’s death. Second, they believe the false teachers in view were second-century Gnostics. Third, the writer refers to ‘your apostles’ (3:2), and says that the ‘fathers’ (who are assumed to be the first generation of Christians) had already died (3:4). From a critical perspective, that suggests 2 Peter was written by someone who was neither an apostle nor one of the first generation of believers. Finally, critics argue that the reference to Christ’s prediction of Peter’s death (1:14) derives from John 21:18. John’s gospel, however was not written during Peter’s lifetime.

MacArthur: Relentless critics also point to supposed differences in style, vocabulary, and doctrine between 1 and 2 Peter. The Greek of the first epistle, they suggest, is polished and sophisticated, while that of the second is coarse and stilted, replete with grandiose language and difficult constructions. The critics claim that the vocabulary of the two epistles is also very different, and 2 Peter shows a knowledge of Greek culture and philosophy far beyond the grasp of a simple Galilean fisherman. Finally, in their reckoning, many doctrinal themes found in 1 Peter are absent from 2 Peter. All of those factors lead many skeptics to insist that the same author could not have written both epistles.

Sproul: More significantly, those who challenge the authorship of this epistle do so on the basis of some striking literary differences between 1 and 2 Peter. Those differences involve three matters. First is the style of the Greek used in each of the epistles. Second is the problem of *hapax legomena*, a term that refers to words found only once in a particular writing or body of writing. For example, we can say that there are *hapax legomena* in Ephesians because there are more than thirty words in that letter that are found nowhere else in Paul’s writing. So, people say, obviously someone else had to have written it. In 2 Peter there are fifty-seven words found in this epistle and nowhere else in the New Testament. Third is that the subject matter of 2 Peter differs from 1 Peter in its philosophical and cultural nature.

b) Describing Pseudonymous Authorship

Moo: Scholars who are convinced by these arguments that Peter could not have written the letter therefore conclude that it is *pseudonymous*—literally, ‘a falsely named’ book. Many books of this sort were written by Jews in the centuries just before and after Christ—books claiming to be written by Adam or Enoch or Moses or Abraham. Someone in the early church, these scholars think, continued this tradition, writing a letter in the name of the apostle Peter after the latter’s death. This author would not have been out to deceive anyone; he would have seen himself

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adopting a popular literary device that people would have immediately recognized for what it was.

Moo: Viewed in this light, it is possible to believe at the same time that Peter did not write 2 Peter and that the Bible is without any error. And we have therefore seen in recent years a few evangelical scholars beginning to express openness to the idea that 2 Peter, along with some other New Testament letters, may be pseudonymous.

Moo: But we think this is an unfortunate move. The acceptance of 2 Peter as both pseudonymous and inerrant requires us to believe that the claim in 1:1 would not have been understood in its day as a claim to authorship—which is unlikely. We have many examples of certain kinds of books being written in someone else’s name—apocalypses especially. And we have evidence that some people, even in the early church wrote *letters* in other people’s names (cp. 2 Th. 2:2). But what we also find is that such books and letters were always regarded with suspicion. L. R. Donelson concludes after a thorough study: ‘No one ever seems to have accepted a document as religiously and philosophically prescriptive which was known to be forged. I do not know of a single example.’ ... The very fact that 2 Peter was accepted as a canonical book, then, presumes that the early Christians who made this decision were positive that Peter wrote it.

c) Defending Peter’s Authorship

Moo: This is undoubtedly the Simon Peter whose name we find in 2 Peter 1:1—a supposition confirmed by the author’s personal reminiscence of the Lord’s prediction of his death (1:13-14; see Jn. 21:20-23) and the Transfiguration (2 Pe. 1:16-18).

MacArthur: The authorship of 2 Peter has been disputed more sharply and to a greater extent than the authorship of any other New Testament book. Yet the letter itself plainly claims to have been written by *Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ* (1:1). The Greek text actually reads ‘Simeon Peter,’ using the Hebrew form of Peter’s name used elsewhere of him only in Acts 15:14. Such only strengthens the author’s claim to be Peter, since a forger would not likely have used an obscure form of Peter’s name. In 1:14 the author referred to Christ’s prediction of his death (cp. Jn. 21:18); in 1:16-18 he claimed to have been an eyewitness (of which there were only three; Mt. 17:1) of the Transfiguration; in 3:1 he referred to an earlier letter (1 Peter) that he wrote to his readers; and in 3:15 he referred to Paul as his ‘beloved brothers,’ thus making himself the great apostle’s spiritual peer. Those personal allusions further strengthen the letter’s claim unless there is compelling evidence to the contrary.

Moo: We do not think the reasons scholars put forward for thinking that the apostle Peter could not have written this letter are at all convincing.... We should accept the plain meaning of the opening words and accept it as an authentic letter of the apostle Peter.

MacArthur: Upon closer examination, however, each of the above arguments utterly fails to disqualify Peter as the author of this epistle.

(1) Style

Gardner: Peter had worked among Greek-speaking Gentiles for many years and was no doubt able to adopt a suitable writing style for his audience just as any capable writer these days can do. The difference between the styles of 1 and 2 Peter could be accounted for by the fact that Silvanus (Silas) acted as a ‘secretary’ in the first epistle (1 Pe. 5:12).

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Moo: The Greek of 2 Peter has an undeniable literary and even philosophical flavor, quite different from the Greek of 1 Peter. But a) there is nothing in the letter that Peter, after many years of ministry in the Greek world, could not have written; b) Peter may have deliberately chosen to write in this style because of the needs of his readers; and c) the more commonplace Greek of 1 Peter may be the result of the help of an amanuensis (Silvanus?—see 1 Peter 5:12).

MacArthur: Much has been made of the differences in style between Peter's two epistles. But the differences are not as significant as many confidently assert.... Nor do the two brief epistles that Peter wrote provide enough material to definitively establish his style.... The difference in vocabulary and style between 1 and 2 Peter can be accounted for in part by their different themes: 1 Peter was written to comfort those undergoing persecution, 2 Peter to warn of the danger of false teachers. Though it adds nothing to the argument, the differences in style may reflect that Silvanus (Silas) acted as Peter's amanuensis for 1 Peter (1 Pe. 5:12), a common practice in Peter's day. Under the apostle's direction, Silvanus may have smoothed out his grammar and syntax. But since Peter was most likely in prison when he wrote 2 Peter, he might not have had access to an amanuensis and thus may have written the epistle in his own hand.

Sproul: Silvanus, the one whom the Apostle Peter mentioned in his first epistle as his letter carrier, was also likely Peter's secretary in the writing of that epistle. Here, in the epistle written shortly before Peter's death, he is using a different secretary, and the difference in secretary would more than reasonably account for the difference in some of the style and structure.

(2) Vocabulary

MacArthur: Some argue that the vocabulary of the two epistles is so different that the same author could not have written both books. However, the percentage of words common to 1 and 2 Peter is roughly the same as the percentage common to 1 Timothy and Titus, both written by Paul and similar in content. It is also similar to the amount of common vocabulary found in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Sproul: The issue of the *hapax legomena* falls apart when we consider that it is not at all unusual for writers to vary their vocabulary.... The Apostle Paul wrote on different subjects at different times to different audiences, yet people doubt his authorship [of Ephesians] because there are thirty-three words in one of his letters that do not appear elsewhere. They have to think that Paul and Peter were absolutely impoverished with respect to vocabulary.

(3) Gnostics

Moo: Nothing the false teachers were propagating is unknown in the first century church.

MacArthur: Neither does the evidence support the claim that the false teachers in view in 2 Peter were second-century Gnostics. The elements of their heretical teaching were common to the first century, while the characteristic teachings of second-century Gnosticism (e.g., cosmological dualism, an evil demiurge who created the evil physical world, salvation through secret knowledge) are absent from 2 Peter.... Nor does 2 Peter discuss the key issues of the second century (e.g., the role of bishops in church government, fully-developed Gnosticism, and Montanism). The failure to mention specific second-century issues is especially noticeable in 3:8.... One of the major beliefs of the second century was chiliasm, an early form of

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premillennialism. If 2 Peter was written in the second century, it is unlikely that its author would have failed to mention chiliasm in connection with 3:8.

(4) Paul

MacArthur: The alleged historical difficulties raised by the critics do not prove that 2 Peter could not have been written during Peter's lifetime. The reference to Paul's letters (3:15-16) need not be forced to mean *everything* Paul wrote; it merely speaks of those epistles Peter was aware of when he wrote 2 Peter. Nothing in the text speaks of a collection of Paul's inspired letters or implies that either Peter or his readers were familiar with all of them. That Paul's letters were already circulating among the churches during his own lifetime is clear from Colossians 4:16. Nor is it an anachronism, as some charge, for Peter to refer to Paul's inspired letters as Scripture (3:16). The apostles knew that what they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jm. 14:26) was Scripture on par with the Old Testament. Paul repeatedly claimed to be writing the very words of God (cp. 1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37; 1 Th. 2:13; cp. 2 Cor. 13:3; 1 Pe. 4:11-12).

Moo: Other New Testament texts suggest that the words of the Lord and certain New Testament books were being regarded as scriptural from an early period.

(5) Apostles

MacArthur: The author had already called himself an apostle (1:1), so the reference to 'your apostles' (3:2) could not mean he was excluding himself from their number. Since the apostles were given by God to the church (cp. 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20; 4:11-12), it was fitting for Peter to describe them (himself included) as 'your apostles.' The 'fathers' in view in 2 Peter 3:4 were not the first generation of Christians, but the Old Testament patriarchs. Both the context (the flood; vv. 5-6) and the usage of the phrase 'the fathers' support this interpretation. In the New Testament (Jn. 6:58; 7:22; Acts 13:32; Rom. 9:5; 11:28; 15:8; Heb. 1:1) and in the writings of the apostolic fathers, that phrase refers not to the first generation of Christians, but to the Old Testament patriarchs. Nor is it necessary that the mention of Peter's impending death (1:14) derive from Jn. 21:18. Obviously, Peter was there when Jesus made that prediction, and he heard it with his own ears.

Moo: Nothing in 2 Peter suggests any kind of ecclesiastical organization or hierarchy, and 'early Catholicism' itself is a dubious concept.

(6) Canon

MacArthur: It is true that the external attestation to 2 Peter in the writings of the church fathers is less extensive than that for most of the other New Testament books. It is however, far more complete than the attestation given to any of the books excluded from the canon. In fact, 2 Peter was never rejected as spurious (even by Fathers who had questions about its authenticity—such as Eusebius), nor was it ever attributed to anyone other than Peter. While Origen was the first to attribute 2 Peter to Peter, others before him were familiar with the epistle. Origen was an astute literary critic, and he would not likely have been taken in by a recent forgery. Moreover, he repeatedly quoted the epistle as Scripture, strongly implying that 2 Peter was known and accepted as canonical long before his time.

Moo: While some Christians expressed doubts about 2 Peter, many others accepted the book from the beginning. People probably had doubts because the book was not widely used and because there were so many Petrine forgeries about.

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Sproul: We need have no concern as to whether the right ones got in or were left out because, in that historical selection process, of all the books given serious consideration, only three were not included in our present New Testament canon. The vast majority of the contenders for inclusion in the New Testament were clearly and widely known to be spurious, many of them false teachings, usually attributed to the Gnostics. In their effort to supplant the authority of the Bible, Gnostics wrote their fraudulent books and tried to sneak them into churches by attributing to them apostolic authorship. Those books were never seriously considered. The only three that did not make it into the canon were *The Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Didache*, and *1 Clement* (Clement was the bishop of Rome in the latter part of the first century), yet even those three books were never strong contenders.

(7) Genre

Gardner: The ‘genre’ of the letter is sometimes regarded as a ‘testament,’ i.e., as in a ‘last will and testament.’ ... If we take this letter at face value, then Peter is indeed writing something of a ‘testament,’ but he is writing it himself from Rome, knowing that his death is imminent. Other literary ‘testaments’ are not easily compared with 2 Peter because they are not usually written in a ‘letter’ form.

Moo: Resemblances between 2 Peter and the ‘testament’ form are undeniable. But the use of this form within a letter renders comparison with other ‘testaments’ dubious.

(8) Philosophy

MacArthur: The charge that 2 Peter reflects a grasp of Hellenistic philosophy beyond what Peter could be expected to know not only foolishly presumes to know what Peter actually knew, but also overlooks the influence of Peter’s environment on him. He was born and reared in Galilee, which even in Isaiah’s day was known as ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’ (Is. 9:1). Nearby was the Gentile region known as the Decapolis (Mt. 4:25; Mk. 5:20; 7:31). Further, it is now known that many of the Hellenistic terms Peter used were in common usage in his day. The apostle mused terms his readers were familiar with, without investing them with the shades of meaning that the Greek philosophers gave them.

Moo: The language of the letter points in the same direction. Many scholars find it difficult to believe that Peter, the Galilean fisherman, could have used some of the philosophical and religious terminology that we find in 2 Peter. But we see this as evidence that Peter has adapted his message to his audience. By using ‘religious’ language that his readers would have been familiar with, he ‘contextualizes’ the gospel to meet their needs.

Sproul: The third issue has to do with the cultural and philosophical nature of Peter’s epistles. If the central theme of 1 Peter is encouragement during times of persecution, this second epistle deals with the threat of the Gnostic heresy. Gnosticism was one of the most serious threats to the life of the church in the later part of the first century and into the second and third centuries. If Peter was aware of the Gnostic threat, then he certainly would have been able to address it in his writings. Peter was not an ignorant man. He understood that the greatest threat to the well-being of God’s people is false-teaching.

(9) Similarities

MacArthur: Despite the supposed differences in style of 1 and 2 Peter, there are remarkable similarities between the books. The wording of the salutations of both epistles, ‘May grace and

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peace be yours in the fullest measure' (1 Pe. 1:2) and 'Grace and peace be multiplied to you' (2 Pe. 1:2) is identical in the Greek, and the phrase is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Other words common to both books but rare in the rest of the New Testament include *aretē* ('excellence'; 1 Pe. 3:21; 2 Pe. 1:14), *philadelphia* ('love of the brethren,' 'brotherly kindness'; 1 Pe. 1:22; 2 Pe. 1:7), *anastrophe* ('behavior,' 'way of life,' 'conduct'; 1 Pe. 1:15, 18; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16; 2 Pe. 2:7; 3:11), and *aselgeia* ('sensuality'; 1 Pe. 4:3; 2 Pe. 2:2, 7, 18). Further, 2 Peter, like 1 Peter, contains Semitic expressions consistent with Peter's Jewish background.

MacArthur: Although the different themes of each epistle required Peter to address different doctrinal issues, there is nonetheless a commonality in their teaching. Both letters speak of God's prophetic word revealed in the Old Testament (1 Pe. 1:10-12; 2 Pe. 1:19-21), the new birth (1 Pe. 1:23; 2 Pe. 1:4), God's sovereign choice of believers (1 Pe. 1:2; 2 Pe. 1:10), the need for personal holiness (1 Pe. 2:11-12; 2 Pe. 1:5-7), God's judgment on immorality (1 Pe. 4:2-5; 2 Pe. 2:10-22), the second coming of Christ (1 Pe. 4:7, 13; 2 Pe. 3:4), the judgment of the wicked (1 Pe. 4:5, 17; 2 Pe. 3:7), and Christ's lordship (1 Pe. 1:3; 3:15; 2 Pe. 1:8, 11, 14, 16; 2:20; 3:18).

(10) Motive

MacArthur: Furthermore, if the book was written by a forger, it is difficult to see what the forger's motive was. The authors of pseudonymous works usually attached the name of a prominent person to their writings to give credence to their false teaching. But 2 Peter contains no teaching that contradicts the rest of the New Testament. Since it is entirely orthodox, the epistle could have easily gone out under the author's own name. The author even notes that the false teachers (whom he is condemning) rejected the apostolic authority of Paul (3:16). In fact, they were unimpressed with authority of any kind (2:1, 10). Thus, a forged appeal to apostolic authority would not have added much to the author's argument (especially since, in so doing, he would have been guilty of the very hypocrisy he was denouncing).

3. Dating Peter

Gardner: Normally it is good to take Scripture at face value unless there are clear indications in the text itself that this should not be done. The claims of this epistle to be by Peter and written towards the end of his life make sense and are thoroughly believable. The traditional view that the epistle was written from Rome to a group of churches with which both Paul and Peter had had contact seems to fit the evidence. Given the 'testament' themes running through the letter, it is natural to assume, as most have traditionally assumed, that it was written in the early to mid-sixties just before Peter was put to death in the persecutions of Christians under Nero.

Moo: If the apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter, the letter must have been written before about 65 AD, when reliable early tradition records Peter's death as a martyr at the time of the emperor Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome. And it was probably written shortly before his death. Peter himself suggests this when, referring to the Lord's prophecy about his death in John 21:18-19, he says the time of his departure from this life is near (2 Pe. 1:13-14). Peter probably borrows in his letter from the ancient Jewish 'testament,' in which a spiritual leader uses the nearness of his death to add special force to his warnings and admonitions. (The best biblical example of such a 'testament' is Jacob's address to his sons in Gen. 49:1-28.). We should picture Peter, then, writing probably from Rome, and perhaps with Nero's persecution already underway. The apostle sense that the time for the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy about his martyrdom had come and thus writes a final note of advice and caution before his end.

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MacArthur: According to tradition, Peter suffered martyrdom near the end of Nero's persecution. Because Nero died in 68 AD, Peter's death must have taken place before that time. Second Peter appears to have been written shortly before the apostle's death (1:14), perhaps in 67 or 68 AD. Peter does not say where he was when he wrote this epistle. But since his death was imminent, and he was martyred in Rome, he probably wrote it while in prison there.

B. Audience (2 Peter 1:1b)

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

1. Identity

a) Geographical Location

Gardner: We cannot be sure which church or group of churches Peter was writing to, but if they are the same as 1 Peter, and he does call this his 'second letter to them' (3:1), then they would have lived in what is now modern Turkey, and the churches would have been made up largely of Gentile converts. ... He does not say where they live although they may be the same people as mentioned in 1 Peter, in which case they lived in modern-day Turkey, places known as Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pe. 1:1)... It is worth noting that while 2 Peter may have been written to the same group of churches as 1 Peter (2 Pe. 3:1 suggests this might be the case), it is by no means certain. 2 Peter 3:1 might well be a reference to a letter of which we have no record.

Moo: Peter addresses it *to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours*. This vague identification has led Christians in the past to denote 2 Peter as a 'catholic' (in its original meaning of 'universal') or 'general' letter—that is, a letter written to the Christian church at large. But 2 Peter gives every indication of being written to a specific group of Christians, who are being bothered by certain false teachers and who have received at least one of Paul's letters (3:15). We would know rather specifically where these Christians lived if 3:1, where Peter refers to his letter as 'my second letter to you,' means that this second letter was written to the same people as was 1 Peter. For 1 Peter is addressed specifically to Christians living in several provinces in northern Asia Minor (modern Turkey). But we cannot be certain of this; Peter may just as well be referring to a letter we no longer have.

MacArthur: Unlike the first epistle, 2 Peter does not name its recipients. However, since this was the second letter he had written them (3:1), they were likely the same people (or at least some of the same people) to whom 1 Peter was addressed, believers who lived in 'Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia' (1 Pe. 1:1), provinces located in Asia Minor (modern Turkey)... Those believers were predominantly Gentiles, but certainly Jewish Christians were also among the recipients of the letter.

b) Gentile Churches

Gardner: Unlike the epistle of Jude, which was probably written to a predominantly converted Jewish congregation, it would seem that Peter was writing to a church of mainly Gentile believers. When he talks of *a faith as precious as ours*, Peter is probably comparing the Gentile converts with those like Peter himself who have a Jewish background.

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Moo: The most we can say, then, is that the Christians Peter writes to probably lived in Asia Minor, Macedonia, or Greece, since these are the regions in which Paul ministered and to which he addressed his letters. For this same reason, we can also surmise that at least most of the Christians Peter addresses in the letter were Gentiles. The opening verses of the letter might also point to a Gentile audience. Peter says that these Christians have *received a faith as precious as ours*, where the ‘ours’ probably refers to Jewish Christians. And Peter’s warning about escaping ‘the corruption in the world caused by evil desires’ (1:4) fits Christians from a Gentile background better than Jewish Christians.

c) *Jewish Allusions*

Gardner: Chapter 2 is full of allusions not just to the Old Testament, but also to some intertestamental Jewish literature, and some have suggested this indicates a church of predominantly Jewish background. However, we know from much of the New Testament that converts of all nationalities were quickly taught the Old Testament. Also, unlike Jude, Peter does not actually mention the Book of Enoch, even though drawing upon it. This may also suggest that, whereas it was known by Jude’s more Jewish audience, it was not known by Peter’s audience.

Moo: To be sure, some scholars have argued for a Jewish audience because of the many allusions in chapter 2 to Old Testament and Jewish traditions. But we know that Gentile converts to Christianity early became acquainted with the Old Testament, and each of the allusions Peter makes would have made good sense to those who had this kind of knowledge.

2. Description

Moo: If Peter’s description of himself sets up the letter by establishing his right to address them, his description of his readers also anticipates some of the points he is going to make in the letter.

a) *Faith*

To those who have obtained a faith...

Helm: By using such a general term—*to those*—we are all included. All who possess abiding faith in Christ should study and apply this letter to their life.

Gardner: *Faith* here is not the body of doctrine that we might find in a creed, but refers to the believer’s own commitment to the Lord Jesus. This faith, this commitment to Jesus as God and Savior, is given him by God, hence Peter says they *received* it.... What Peter says here reminds us that we have no room to boast, but rather we rejoice as Peter does at having received such a *precious* gift that gives us status as members of the covenant community. Whatever our background, nationality, or race, we belong to His people through saving faith.

Moo: The word *faith*...has here its usual active sense: the act of believing. To be sure, speaking of faith in this sense as something that is *received* is unusual; and may commentators therefore think that Peter is referring to faith in its passive sense: that which Christians believe, i.e., Christian truth or doctrine. But the word translated ‘receive’ (*lanchano*) suggests the idea of an appointment or distribution by lot. Faith is itself a gift from God, distributed alike to both Jews and Gentiles.

MacArthur: The manner in which Peter described his readers is theologically rich, albeit brief, and points to the divine source of salvation. *Have received* implies believers’ salvation is a gift. The verb (*lagchanō*) means ‘to gain by divine will’ or ‘given by an allotment.’ ... Clearly it

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refers to something not obtained by human effort or based on personal worthiness but issued from God's sovereign purpose. Peter's readers received *faith* because God graciously willed to give it to them. A *faith* here could mean *the* objective faith, as in the doctrines of the Christian faith, or it could denote subjective belief. But it is best to understand it in this context without the definite article (in contrast to Jude 3) as subjective faith, the Christian's power to believe the gospel for salvation. Even though belief in the gospel is commanded of all, so that all are responsible for their obedience or disobedience—and in that sense it is the human side of salvation—God still must supernaturally grant sinners the ability and power to believe unto salvation (Eph. 2:8-9; cp. 6:23; Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 2:5). Peter began his first epistle writing about divine choice and election in salvation, whereas here he refers to the human response of faith. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility form the essential elements of salvation. Only when the Holy Spirit awakens someone's dead soul in response to hearing or reading the gospel is saving faith initiated so the sinner can embrace redemption.

Sproul: This second part of verse 1 is worthy of the writing of at least ten books. Peter addresses the epistle to fellow believers who have received faith. Just like the Apostle Paul, so the Apostle Peter defines faith not as something that originates and is exercised by an unregenerate human heart, but as something the believer receives passively. If you have faith in Jesus Christ, you did not conjure it up.... Saving faith is not the result of a human decision. It is a divine gift.... In our vocabulary, something called *precious* has an exceedingly high value. Gems we call precious stones because they are so much more valuable than gravel. Just so, Peter describes the faith by which we are saved as a precious faith. Is there any possession you have more precious than the faith that links you to Christ and delivers you to His entire inheritance?

b) *Standing*

... *of equal standing with ours*...

Gardner: Even though Peter was an apostle and a Jew, these Gentile Christians had *a faith as precious as ours*.... As with any specially valuable gift, the word *precious* is an apt description.

Moo: These Christians, who are Gentiles, have *received a faith as precious as ours*. Peter may be comparing the faith of these Christians to that of himself and other apostles.... But the emphasis here is not on revelation (as it is in vv. 16-21), but on faith. And this makes it more likely that Peter wants to assure these Gentile Christians that they have a status in the new covenant community of believers fully equal to that of himself and other Jewish Christians. By breaking through all ethnic barriers, the gospel message has enabled Gentiles, who were at one time 'foreigners to the covenants of the promise' (Eph. 2:12), to believe in Jesus Christ and so be saved from their sins. Gentile Christians are no second-class citizens in the kingdom of heaven. Such an assurance was probably important for these Gentile Christians to hear so that they could take confidence in their full status as God's children and not allow the false teachers to sow doubt in their minds on this point.

MacArthur: Further evidence that faith here is subjective comes from Peter's description of his reader's faith as *of the same kind as ours*. The word rendered *same kind* (*isotimon*) means 'equally valuable,' or 'of equal privilege.' It designated that which was equal in rank, position, honor, standing, price, or value. This would make no sense if referring to the body of gospel truth, since that truth has no equal. Each believer has received faith as a personal gift, a faith that is the same in nature, the precious gift of God, which brings equal spiritual privileges in salvation to all who receive it.... Peter's use of the pronoun *ours* most likely had in view the conflict

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between Jews and Gentiles in the church. The book of Acts records that he was heavily involved in that issue in the early days of the church (cp. Acts 11:4-17; 10:1-48)... Among His elect, God makes no favored distinctions based on ethnicity—He gives all Christians the same saving faith with all its privileges (cp. Eph. 2:11-18; 4:5).

Helm: By the term *ours*, I think the apostles are meant (there is no mention in this letter of Jews or Gentiles). In this exalted way, then, we are told that our faith is equal to that of our Lord's earliest and closest followers. While we may be living thousands of years later, our faith is no way deficient or inferior. We have apostolic faith—nothing less. Our faith is given equal standing. And though we have fallen, we too can know what it is to stand with them.

c) *Righteousness*

...by the righteousness of our God...

Gardner: Peter then speaks of the manner in which this faith has been received: *through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. This could refer to God's righteousness, meaning His fairness and justice in giving equal status to all people of faith, whether Jew or Gentile. Alternatively, it could refer to the righteousness by which God puts people right with Himself. This is the righteousness He imputes to His people as He ensures that they may be declared 'not guilty' before the judgment seat of God. Either is possible here, but the clear teaching that faith is *received* may well suggest that the latter understanding of righteousness is correct here.

Moo: Peter further describes these Christians to whom he writes as those who have obtained this faith *through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. *Righteousness (dikaioyne)* has a broad range of meaning in the Bible. One of its meanings is 'justice' or 'fairness,' and some commentators think this meaning fits very well here.... But *righteousness* normally refers to the act by which God puts sinners in a right relationship to Him. And this seems to be the more likely meaning here.

MacArthur: Believer's saving faith is available because of *the righteousness of...Jesus Christ*. Sinners are given eternal life because the Savior imputes His perfect righteousness to them (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil 3:8-9; 1 Pe. 2:24), covering their sins and rendering them acceptable to Him.

Sproul: It may be in this sentence that Peter is making reference to that precious faith that links us now to the righteousness that is the ground of our salvation. The sentence could also be interpreted to mean that it is through God's own marvelous righteousness that He has been pleased to give us the same precious gift of faith that He has given to others. I do not know which of these two possible interpretations is the correct one, but either one ends up in the same place. The precious faith we have obtained is *by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*.

Helm: The gospel of Christ's righteousness is our comfort. Our ability to stand before God someday as rescued and reclaimed persons depends entirely on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He alone has flown through this world without falling. He alone can and did make atonement for sin. Thus, He alone can bring us home. Ensuring that we remain in this faith is one of the main ideas this letter will pass on.

d) *Deity*

...of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

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Gardner: This righteousness is attributed to *our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. Among some scholars there is debate about translating this phrase. Is this referring to both God and Jesus, ('...God and our Savior Jesus Christ,' AV), or to Jesus as God, with the NIV? The latter is much more likely, and well in line with the rest of this epistle (see, e.g., 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 15, 18). Peter thus affirms the Divinity of Christ.

Moo: What is unusual about this phrase, however, is that this is the only place in the New Testament where we read of *the righteousness of...Jesus Christ*. Everywhere else the righteousness is attributed to God. But this reference to Christ is in keeping with the whole tenor of the letter, which consistently puts Christ at the same level as God. The very wording at the end of this phrase makes this point even clearer. By translating *our God and Savior Jesus Christ*, the NIV makes clear that both the titles of *God* and *Savior* apply to Jesus Christ. (Contrast the KJV rendering 'of God and our Savior Jesus Christ, or the NRSV margin, 'of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ.'). The NIV translation is almost certainly correct. Here, therefore, we have one of the few verses in the New Testament where Jesus is explicitly called *God*.

MacArthur: It is noteworthy that Peter does not refer to God *our* Father here but to *our God and Savior, Jesus Christ*. Righteousness here does proceed from the Father, but it reaches every believer through the Son, Jesus Christ (cp. Gal. 3:8-11; Phil. 3:8-9). The Greek construction places just one article before the phrase *God and Savior*, which makes both terms refer to the same person. Thus Peter identifies Jesus, not just as Savior, but as God, the author and agent of salvation. The apostle made the same relation clear in his Pentecost sermon, in which he took the Old Testament truth of God and applied it to Jesus (Acts 2:21-36; cp. Mt. 1:21; Acts 4:12; 5:31).

Sproul: Here the structure is abundantly clear. Peter is talking about the gift that comes to us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter is referring to Jesus not only as Messiah, our Savior, but as God Himself. There are few texts in all the New Testament that are as clear as this one in its attributing deity to Jesus.

C. Address (2 Peter 1:2)

²*May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

1. Grace and Peace (1:2a)

²*May grace and peace be multiplied to you...*

Gardner: Peter is concerned that these people know and experience the continuing *grace* of God in their lives and the objective reality of *peace* with Him in *abundance*. These are exactly the same words used by Peter in 1 Peter 1:2. These Christians have been saved and declared righteous and need to act in a way that enjoys and lives up to their new status as part of God's covenant people. Just as salvation itself is an undeserved gift from our God and Savior Jesus Christ, so continuing in the covenant community of God's people must be entirely of grace. Peter is going to make much of this as the letter proceeds, so he prays that they will experience an *abundance* of that grace and continued peace with God. Both *grace* and *peace* are words with a substantial background in the Old Testament. *Grace* points to the undeserved covenant love of the Lord so often experienced by the people of Israel (the Hebrew word *hesed* specially highlights this faithful covenant love of God for His people. It is often translated 'unfailing love')

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in the NIV)... *Peace* is another ‘covenant’ concept and reflects the Hebrew concept of *shalom*, the peace experienced by those who are God’s people, who have been forgiven and who inherit His blessings.

Moo: Verse 2, which follows generally the typical New Testament ‘greeting’ form, continues to sound notes that will be heard throughout 2 Peter. *Grace* and *peace* appear frequently in these New Testament salutations.

MacArthur: In Peter’s version of this familiar salutation, he reminds readers that true saints live in the realm of *grace and peace*.... God wants the substance of salvation *grace and peace* to be *multiplied*, to come in unending, abundant streams to His children. Similar statements fill the epistles (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:12; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2). *Grace* (*charis*) is God’s free, unmerited favor toward sinners, which grants those who believe the gospel complete forgiveness forever through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Titus 3:7). *Peace* (*eirēnē*) with God and from Him in all life’s circumstances is the effect of grace (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 1:20), flowing out of the forgiveness God has given to all the elect (cp. Ps. 85:8; Is.26:12; 2 Th. 3:16).

Sproul: Expressions of grace and peace are common in the salutations of the New Testament epistles. The idea of grace and peace is deeply rooted in Old Testament history. In the Hebrew benediction, God is asked to grant grace and peace to His people (Num. 6:24-26).... The concept of peace was so important to Jewish people that it became the basic form of personal greeting. To this day, the Jew will greet his friend with *Shalom Aleichem*, to which the response is *Aleichem shalom*—‘Peace be upon you, and unto you peace.’ Peter does something a bit differently here in his salutation. Instead of simply saying ‘Grace and peace to you,’ he says *Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*. He speaks of a multiplication of grace and peace.... If the grace of justification cannot be augmented or diminished—why does Peter speak about a multiplication of grace and peace? He does so because the grace of justification is not the only grace that we receive from God.... Although our justification can never be increased, our faith certainly can. The strength of our faith is a fragile thing. It is something that must be fed daily by what we call the ‘means of grace.’ Through the study of God’s Word, prayer, worship, and fellowship, God fortifies our faith and our sanctification. Certainly sanctification can and must increase as we continue our pilgrimage of faith, but all of God’s grace is unmerited by us.

2. Knowledge of God (1:2b)

...in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Moo: Only here in a New Testament letter opening do we find a prayer that *knowledge* might be *yours in abundance*. *Knowledge* is a key idea in the letter. Significantly, Peter both opens and closes the letter with a reference to the knowledge of God and/or Christ (see also 3:18). He refers to this knowledge again in 1:3 and 8 as the foundation for his readers’ Christian experience. In a similar vein, he claims that the false teachers’ fate will be all the more serious because they had come to know Christ but had then turned away from that knowledge (2:20-21). In its biblical context, *knowledge* involves relationship. And it was just this relationship with Christ that is the ultimate issue in 2 Peter. Peter’s central purpose in this letter is to encourage Christians to make this *knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord* productive and fruitful (see 1:8).

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MacArthur: All this grace and peace comes in (through) *the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*. It is not available to those who do not know and wholeheartedly embrace the gospel. *Knowledge* (*epignōsis*; cp. 1:8; 2:20) is a strengthened form of the basic Greek word for ‘knowledge’ (*gnosis*; cp. 1:5, 6; 3:18). It conveys the idea of a full rich, thorough knowledge, involving a degree of intimate understanding of a specific subject (cp. Rom. 3:20; 10:2; Eph. 1:17). The substance of one’s salvation is this kind of rational, objective knowledge of God through His Word.... The knowledge that brings salvation derives not from feelings, intuition, emotion, or personal experience, but only from the revealed truth based on the gospel preached in and from the Word.... Salvation requires a genuine knowledge of the person and work of Jesus Christ (cp. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). It involves not merely knowing the truth *about* Him, but actually *knowing* Him through the truth of His Word (cp. Jn. 20:30-31; 21:24; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Jn. 5:11-13). Hence Peter closed this letter by exhorting his believing readers, who already possessed that saving *knowledge*, to ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (3:18). Knowing the Lord in salvation is the starting point. The rest of the believer’s life is a pursuit of greater knowledge of the glory of the Lord and His grace.

Sproul: Peter links the multiplication of grace and peace to the knowledge of God, which is the central thesis of this epistle.... Over against the heretical view of knowledge, Peter talks about true knowledge, the knowledge that comes from God, which is, perhaps, one of the most important—if not *the* most important—grace that He disposes upon His people. God gives us knowledge that comes to us from Himself.

Helm: With divine foreshadowing, we read for the first time what it is that must govern our journey to our heavenly home. The text opens by claiming that we need *knowledge*. And the letter will close on the same word. So, from beginning to end we stand in need of a certain kind of knowledge, a knowledge of God (1:2, 8, 3:18 and shown by way of contrast in 2:20). For this *knowledge* is the actual basis for strengthening the sure foundation that Peter means to convey in his letter. It is the central theme, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, this knowledge is not merely intellectual or academic. It involves a firsthand experience of relational intimacy with God through abiding faith in Christ.

Gardner: Here Peter introduces a theme that also continues through the epistle. Knowledge in this sense is both an intellectual grasp of who God and Jesus are and what they say and demand, and a personal experience and commitment to them. Sometimes people these days will try to divide divine so-called ‘head knowledge’ from ‘heart knowledge.’ While we all understand what they are saying, that sort of divide is most unbiblical. Often it becomes the excuse for some to avoid all serious Bible study, for they want only to experience God in their hearts and feelings. Others, at least in practice, tend to over-emphasize what we should *study* about God without drawing enough attention to experiencing the great joy of being His children.... Peter makes no such divisions, nor does any part of Scripture. Here he states that Christians experience the grace of God and of Jesus and the objective reality of peace through the knowledge of God. Knowledge of God in the context of this letter clearly involves coming to know Him personally and going through life experiencing His Spirit within, but also learning more about Him through studying His Word more deeply. False teachers may have ‘known’ the way of righteousness, but they have ignored it. It has not become part and parcel of their life and behavior (2:20-21). The importance of what Peter says in verse 2 is dramatically emphasized as Peter closes his letter in 3:18 on the same note: ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Unless we have a Christianity that is based on a knowledge of God revealed in His Word where

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we learn of Him, and yet which is also rooted in a personal relationship that grows over the years, then we are liable to be led astray by false teachers. It is part and parcel of the Christian life this side of Christ's Second Coming that we are to continue growing in grace and the knowledge of God.

Moo: In our day, we are rightly warned about the danger of a sterile faith, of a 'head' knowledge that never touches the heart. But we need equally to be careful of a 'heart' knowledge that never touches the head! Too many Christians *know* too little about their faith; we are therefore often unprepared to explain how our 'God' differs from the 'God' of Mormonism or of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Again and again the New Testament makes plain that our very salvation can depend on confessing truth about God and His revelation in His Son. The biblical writers demand 'a knowledge of God' that unites head and heart. We must be careful not to sacrifice the head in favor of the heart.

Sproul: People in our day do not want to take doctrine seriously. They say that doctrine divides, so instead we must focus on relationships, but ironically, in so saying, they mimic the very people that Peter is addressing in this second epistle. The biggest heretical threat in the first two hundred years of Christianity came from Gnosticism.

D. Additional Information

1. Jude

a) Scholar Views

Moo: 2 Peter and Jude closely resemble each other. Each was written in response to false teaching, the false teaching they oppose appears to be almost the same, and they denounce the false teachers in similar terms.... These parallels, while not lengthy, are nevertheless striking; many involve words and expressions not found elsewhere in the Bible and...they occur in the same order in both letters.... How are we to explain this startling similarity? ... Most scholars think that Peter and Jude borrowed material when they wrote their letters. This could have happened in three different ways: 1) Peter could have borrowed from the letter of Jude; 2) Jude could have used the letter of 2 Peter; or 3) both Peter and Jude could have used another document that we no longer have.

Gardner: The similarities between [2 Peter chapter 2 and Jude] are obvious even on a superficial reading. This relationship has been explained in a variety of ways. Generally, it falls into three categories: a) Peter borrowed from Jude; b) Jude borrowed from 2 Peter; c) both Jude and 2 Peter used a similar or the same source material. Jude is only twenty-five verses long and fifteen of these appear in at least a very similar form in 2 Peter 2. It is impossible to be absolutely certain who actually wrote first....

Moo: Most scholars favor the first option. They argue that it makes perfect sense to think that Peter would have wanted to expand on Jude, whereas it is hard to imagine why there would have been a need for Jude if 2 Peter already existed. But this argument is far from convincing. Surely one can imagine a situation in which a writer would have wanted to extract certain points from another letter that had particular relevance to a situation.... The other arguments usually mounted in favor of the dependence of 2 Peter on Jude are no more compelling.

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Gardner: However, it should be noted that even if Peter borrowed, in this case from Jude, there is still no need to exclude apostolic authorship of 2 Peter, as some have suggested. They argue that a great apostle would not draw on a minor figure like Jude. Such a suggestion, though, fails adequately to take account of two facts. Firstly, Jude was also regarded as having apostolic authority and secondly, as many have pointed out, literature is full of examples of great writers who have borrowed from those less well known than themselves.

Moo: Few contemporary writer argue for the primacy of 2 Peter. Those who did so in the past often appealed to Peter's apostolic status as a key point. They thought that it would be unlikely for an apostle of Peter's rank to borrow from a non-apostle. But I think this object rests on an inappropriate view of apostles—important and authoritative figures though they were, they certainly did not develop their ideas independently of early Christian teaching and tradition.

Moo: Sensing a stalemate on the issue and finding evidence that could point either direction, a few scholars have suggested that both Jude and 2 Peter borrowed independently from a common source. But without any positive evidence to support it, this theory suffers a death-blow from the principle of 'Occam's Razor': simpler theories should be preferred to more complicated ones.

b) Skeptics' View

MacArthur: A convincing argument in the minds of many critics is 2 Peter's alleged literary dependency on Jude. Since they date Jude later than Peter's lifetime, it follows that Peter could not have written 2 Peter. Further, they insist that an apostle would not borrow so extensively from a non-apostolic source.

MacArthur: The critic's argument that 2 Peter's supposed literary dependence on Jude proves it was written after Peter's lifetime depends on two assumptions. First, the author of 2 Peter had to have borrowed from Jude. Second, Jude had to been written after Peter's lifetime. Neither assumption, however, can be proved. The internal evidence indicates that 2 Peter came first, since Peter employed future tenses to describe the false-teaching apostates (2:1-3; 3:3). Jude, on the other hand, in paralleling 2 Peter, used tenses that say those who were prophesied had arrived (Jude 4). He used no future tenses with reference to the apostates.

c) Sources Views

Gardner: My own view is that probably Jude and 2 Peter were written around the same time, while I am unpersuaded by any of the arguments supporting either those who believe Jude was written first or those who believe 2 Peter was written first.

Moo: My own conclusion is that none of the three usual theories has enough positive evidence in favor to accept as even a working hypothesis. Nevertheless, if I were forced to the wall, I would probably opt for the theory that has Jude borrowing from Peter. My reason for doing so roots in the striking similarity between two texts in these letters (2 Pe. 3:3; Jude 17-18)... The text from Jude reads very much like a quotation of 2 Peter 3:3. If this were the case, then the situation would have been something like this: Peter, having written a letter castigating false teachers in a specific community, shared its contents with Jude. Jude then borrowed freely those portions of 2 Peter that were relevant to a similar false teaching that he was dealing with in his community. But I am the first to admit that the identification is by no means certain.

Gardner: Similarities there are, and this may suggest that some of the false teaching in both churches was similar, but the differences are considerable as well. 2 Peter has much more in it

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that is not found in Jude than is. It tackles some different themes and so we must never be tempted to assume that if we have studied the one book we can virtually ignore the other.

2. Purpose

Gardner: Peter was writing to churches paralleled by many today—where false teaching was on the rise. He warned against the false teachings that denied the return of Christ, and allowed a weakening in moral conduct. His concern is that the original message of the gospel and the promise of Christ's return should not be forgotten. That 'core' gospel is centered in historical facts which include eye-witness testimony from the apostles, and in the truth of revealed Scripture.

MacArthur: Peter wrote his first epistle to comfort and instruct believers who were facing the external threat of persecution. Peter in this letter addresses the even more deadly threat of false teachers who would arise within the church. The apostle warned believers to be on the alert against their deceiving lives. Its vivid and incisive depiction of heretics and apostates is comparable only to Jude's. Peter did not identify specific heresy. As noted above, it lacked the hallmarks of second-century Gnosticism. Whoever these heretics were, they were like many others who have denied Christ (2:1); twisted the Scriptures, including Paul's writings (3:15-16); followed instead the 'cleverly devised tales' (1:16) of 'destructive heresies' (2:1); mocked the second coming of Christ (3:4) and the coming judgment (3:5-7); practiced immorality (2:2, 13-14, 19); despised authority (2:10); were arrogant and vain (2:18); and sought material gain (2:3, 14). Second Peter serves not only as a much needed rebuke of the false teachers of Peter's day, but it also gives characteristics common to the false teachers of every age. Because wickedness of life flows from heretical doctrine, Peter focused more on their godless behavior than on the specific teachings they propagated.

Moo: However we explain them, the similarities between 2 Peter and Jude suggest that they are fighting the same kind of false teaching. Since both writers are more interested in condemning the false teaching than they are in describing it, we do not have a lot of explicit information about just what the teaching is. Both make clear that these people are trying to convince others of their false views (see 2 Pe. 2:1-3; Jude 19). But the only clear reference to a doctrinal error comes in Peter's warning about 'scoffers,' who are questioning whether the Lord Jesus really will return to judge the world (2 Pe. 3:3-4). What Peter and Jude concentrate on, then, is not what these people are *teaching* but the way they are *living*. They are obviously concerned that these false 'behaviorists' will draw Christians into their own sinful and destructive lifestyles.

Moo: What does this lifestyle look like? In a word, these false teachers are libertines. They assume that the grace of God revealed in Christ gives them the 'liberty' to do just about anything they want to do (2 Pe. 2:19-20; Jude 4). They have no use for any kind of authority (especially spiritual authorities, like angels; cp. 2 Pe. 2:10-11; Jude 8-9). And so they engage in all manner of 'sins of the flesh': illicit sex, perhaps including homosexuality, excess drinking and eating, greed for money (2 Pe. 2:13-16, 18-20; Jude 16, 19). What is especially shocking is that both Peter and Jude make clear that these profligates are claiming to be Christians (2 Pe. 2:1, 21-22; Jude 4). They are, in effect at least, 'denying the Lord' and are therefore destined for the condemnation reserved for those who rebel against the Lord.

Moo: Jude and Peter describe them in similar terms. But there is one major difference: only Peter mentions their skepticism about the return of Christ. This may mean that we are wrong to lump the false teachers of Jude and 2 Peter together. But the similarities between the two

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descriptions greatly outweigh this single clear difference. Furthermore, Jude’s brief reference to ‘scoffers’ (v. 18) may suggest that he, too, is aware of the false teachers’ mockery of the idea of the Lord’s return. We certainly should not make the mistake of reading what Jude says into Peter or vice versa. And Jude and Peter may very well be dealing with different specific outbreaks of the false teaching. But that the false teaching they combat is pretty much the same is clear.

Moo: What Peter and Jude are dealing with, then, is an outbreak of false teaching that saw in the free forgiveness of the gospel a golden opportunity to indulge in their own selfish and sinful desires (see 2 Pe. 2:19; Jude 4). We find similar outbreaks in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians) at about the same time or a bit earlier, and a bit later in some of the churches in Asia Minor (see the references to the ‘Nicolaitans’ at the church of Ephesus and Pergamum—Rev. 2:6, 15—and the followers of the teaching of Balaam in the church at Pergamum—2:14-15).

Moo: Since we know so little about the heresy combatted in these letters, we cannot match it with an exact counterpart in our own day. But this certainly does not mean that Peter and Jude have nothing to say to us today—far from it! For the saying that ‘there is nothing new under the sun’ applies to false teaching as much as it does to anything else. Perversions of Christian truth tend to fall into a few quite recognizable patterns. And the pattern we can discern in Jude and 2 Peter is one easily recognized in the church today.... The letters of 2 Peter and Jude warn us about any tendency to treat sin lightly, to suppose that an immoral lifestyle can be pursued without any penalty.... The condemnation that Peter and Jude pronounce on the false teachers of their day warns us about the danger of even beginning to follow that road. And they teach us the way to avoid this destructive path: by ‘remembering’ (taking to heart, internalizing) the message of Christ and His apostles.

3. Theme

Gardner: In spite of his concern that the people to whom he is writing should be on their guard against false teaching, Peter’s letter delights in such major themes as the awesome sovereignty of God; the glorious return of Jesus Christ; the full trustworthiness of God’s Word in Scripture; and the sheer joy and excitement of growing in the knowledge of God and living for Him.

Moo: The biblical writers often draw attention to a particular idea or word by ‘framing’ their argument with it (the technical word is *inclusio*). For Peter, in other words, ‘growing in knowledge’ is a key idea in this letter. In the Bible, ‘knowing’ is a very personal activity. The Old Testament writers use the word to describe intimate relations between one person and another, including sexual relations. The New Testament also uses the word in this way, as when Paul asserts that ‘Jesus knew no sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, when Peter begins his letter by referring to *the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*, he is saying that the readers of the letter will only enjoy *grace and peace in abundance* as they grow in their relationship to God and to Jesus.... ‘Knowing God’ does mean having a warm, intimate relationship with our Creator, but it also means understanding who He is, with all its implication. Peter, we remember, is warning his readers about some heretical teachers. To avoid their errors, these Christians must not only have a ‘warm and fuzzy’ feeling toward God, they also need to know some specific things about Him, what He has done, and what He demands of us. One of the things they need to know, Peter hints, is that Jesus is God (v. 1).

Helm: Peter’s second letter takes as its theme ‘the knowledge of God’ (1:2, 3, 8; 2:20; 3:18; see also 1:5-6, 16, 20; 2:9, 21; 3:3, 17). It is written to provide direction to all who come after the

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apostolic age. The apostles knew that after their death the gospel message they preached would be challenged by many and discarded by some. In essence, they were aware that the church would need answers on great gospel questions, especially those relating to the final judgment, Christ's future coming, and life in light of these realities. And these answers must conform to real knowledge. Put simply, as the apostolic age drew to a close, the future of the Christian faith could not rest merely on the strength of stories told about those who walked and talked with Jesus Christ. This letter, then, is meant to remind readers across the ages that the contents of the apostle's message, as put forward in the preaching of Peter (1:1), reveals what it truly means to 'know God.' ... Peter describes the differences between a true knowledge of God and the ideas being offered up by false teachers.

DSB: I have summarized the theme of 2 Peter as: *Grow in Grace and Knowledge*, which is also the title of the last lesson on 2 Peter. Thus, 1 Peter exhorts believers how to live Christian lives in face of the danger of suffering caused by opponents outside the church; while 2 Peter is primarily focused on the internal threat of false teachers within the church.

4. Relevance

Helm: This letter's theme—a proper knowledge of God—is incredibly relevant in our age.... At least three...contemporary questions are taken up in Second Peter. First, *can someone come to know God without knowledge of Jesus as God's Son?* In our twenty-first century context there is an overabundance of religious choices. And choice after choice dilutes, softens, or outright abandons the absolute necessity of belief in Jesus. For many, knowledge of God is something available from doing good works or being socially active or participating in any number of religious ceremonies or belief systems; Jesus is secondary. To put the question bluntly: can someone come to know God without Jesus Christ at the center? Second Peter provides the answer. A true knowledge of God includes knowledge of Jesus Christ as God's Son.... Peter concludes unabashedly that a true knowledge of God must include a belief in Jesus as His Son.

Helm: Second, *can one know God and yet abandon the rigorous life that the apostles required of those who profess Christ?* The false prophets of Peter's day were quick to suggest that alternative viewpoints were permissible. Many were willing to advocate sexual and material freedoms that ran contrary to the apostles' message (2:2, 3, 14;16, 19). Amazingly, the great gospel issues of our day remain the same: can one truly know God and yet separate himself or herself from the historic, orthodox understanding of sexual ethics? Can one possess knowledge of God and yet pursue a life of personal gain? Second Peter confronts those who would teach that sensuality and greed are acceptable parts of a Christian lifestyle.

Helm: Third, *can you know God and reject the notion that Jesus will return?* Put differently, and more precisely, can you possess a knowledge of God that leaves out that bit at the end of the Apostle's Creed about Him coming back 'to judge the living and the dead'? Peter's letter confronts those who deny that Jesus Christ will return as Judge.

5. Aim

Helm: In an insecure world where contradictory views on the gospel and its demands persist, we need reliable footing, a sure foundation to keep us from stumbling. Peter's aim in writing this second letter is simply to provide that foundation, to establish the feet of the church on higher, solid ground. The letter has at least three distinct aims. First, the letter is written to *establish, strengthen, and stabilize* Christians in the true knowledge of God. The words *establish,*

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strengthen, and *stabilize* are intentionally chosen. Not only does each of these words appear in the text of 2 Peter in some form, but they all originate from the same word in Greek. The identical word appears in 1:12 as ‘established,’ in 3:17 as ‘stability,’ and in 2:14 and 3:16 as ‘unsteady’ and ‘unstable’ respectively. Peter’s letter is written so that we will not lose our own stability but will find strength and sure footing in a true knowledge of God.

Helm: Second, the letter intends to rebuke, warn, and correct those among us who teach and revel in any other knowledge of God. This aim is especially directed at Bible teachers. The structure of the letter reveals this aim as central. Chapter 2 is this letter’s gravitational center. As such, it includes some of the strongest language in the entire Bible. And it is directed against pastors and teachers who advocate a different gospel, a more accommodating way—knowledge of a different sort. In essence, it is impossible to preach from this letter without seriously engaging one’s own life and practice.

Helm: Finally, this letter aims to rescue and reclaim the faithful who have tripped and fallen along the way. Put simply, it not only proves to the stumbling church throughout all ages what it means to know God—it intends to pick us up and put us back on the way.

Helm: Before we begin, it is important to recognize the tone of the letter. It is more polemical than pastoral. Notice the strength of the words. In essence, it is a fighting letter more than a friendly one. In this respect, the letter is surprisingly belligerent. For instance, much of chapter 2 dramatically underscores this point. Peter holds nothing back in his use of controversial argument, insult, and hyperbole in his battle with those who disagree. Make no mistake, the letter wars over what constitutes a true knowledge of God. That said, it is not written directly to Peter’s enemies but to those who are spoke of as having ‘a faith of equal standing’ with the apostles (1:1) and as such is addressed to the beloved (3:1, 8, 14). In summary, 2 Peter is written to the church throughout the ages in an effort to confront the inevitable confusion that persists on great gospel questions. It is written with the hope not only of guarding God’s own people but of unmasking all who stand condemned for compromising on what it means to really know God.

For next time: Read 2 Peter 1:3-11.

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Lesson Summary

XIV. Peter Squared (2 Peter 1:1-2)

Aim: To introduce the letter of 2 Peter, and to recognize the importance of growing in grace and the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.

A. Author (1:1a)

1. Describing Peter (1:1a) – short biography

- *Simeon Peter*; cp. Acts 15:14; *Simeon* Hebrew form of Simon; *Peter*, ‘the rock’; both his Jewish and Greek names; we are meeting the whole man
- *Servant (doulos)*; a humble title, albeit with honor (cp. with OT saints)
- *Apostle (apostolos)*; = messenger; authority of Jesus Christ; pattern for all in spiritual leadership—the submissive, sacrificial anonymity of a slave, combined with the dignity, significance, and authority of an apostle

2. Defending Peter

- Many commentators deny Petrine authorship; wide variety of (inconclusive) factors; instead believing it was pseudonymous (ironic because the letter is against falsehood)
- Style and vocabulary differ from 1 Peter ; amanuensis, topic, situation can explain
- No reason to believe false teaching was Gnosticism of 2nd century
- References to Paul and Apostles could be made by Peter
- Canon, while slower to recognize 2 Peter, did accept it
- Genre is a ‘testament’ in letter form; but doesn’t require it to be pseudonymous
- Peter was experienced/intelligent and could handle Greek philosophical ideas

3. Dating Peter

- Nero died 68 AD; Peter martyred by Nero – crucified upside down c. 65-68 AD
- Near Peter’s death (cp 1:13-14), as prophesied by Jesus (cp. Jn. 21:18-19)
- Most likely date, therefore is in 65-67 AD, written from prison in Rome

B. Audience (1:1b)

1. Identity

- Identity not specified, but this is the “second letter” (3:1); if the ‘first letter’ were 1 Peter, it was written to Gentile Christians in Asia Minor—much of modern Turkey
- *A faith as precious as ours* (1:1b) – points to Gentiles (*ours* refers to Jews)
- There are many Jewish allusions (see ch. 2); however, Gentile converts taught the OT

2. Description (1:1b)

- *Obtained a faith of equal standing with ours*; faith is ‘received’ as a gift; all the elect have the same saving faith; it is ‘precious’
- This faith is *by the righteousness of our God*; God’s act of justification through Jesus
- *Our God and Savior Jesus Christ*; one of the clearest affirmations of deity of Jesus

C. Address (1:2)

1. Grace and Peace (1:2a) (same greeting as in 1 Peter 1:2b)

- Grace (cp. *hesed*); Peter was restored and recipient of God’s grace
- Peace (cp. *shalom*); grace & peace multiplied

2. Knowledge of God (1:2b)

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- Grace and peace come through *the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*
- *Knowledge (epignōsis)* is the key theme of 2 Peter; this *knowledge* is only available to those who embrace the gospel
- *Knowledge* includes both ‘head’ & ‘heart’ knowledge; it is informational & relational
- Peter’s central purpose in this letter is to encourage Christians to make this *knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord* productive and fruitful (cp. 3:18)

D. Additional Information

1. Jude

- Jude and 2 Peter (especially ch. 2) closely resemble each other; no consensus on which letter came first/who borrowed from who
- Skeptics uses this as another attempt to discredit Peter’s authorship, claiming Jude was written after Peter’s lifetime and 2 Peter copies from Jude
- I lean toward 2 Peter coming first and Jude borrowing from 2 Peter; strongly advocated by MacArthur, lightly supported by Moo; Gardner is ‘agnostic’

2. Purpose

- Written to warn audience about rise of false teachers; their doctrine is not specified, but their libertine lifestyle is described

3. Theme

- The knowledge of God, ‘Knowing God’ – as opposed to the false knowledge being propagated by false teachers
- My theme is *Grow in Grace and Knowledge*; 1 Peter focused on suffering caused by external persecution; 2 Peter focuses on internal threat of false teachers in the church

4. Relevance

- A true knowledge of God must include a belief in Jesus as His Son
- Peter confronts those who would teach that sensuality and greed are acceptable parts of a Christian lifestyle
- Peter’s letter confronts those who deny that Jesus Christ will return as Judge

5. Aim

- To establish, strengthen, and stabilize Christians in the true knowledge of God
- To rebuke, warn, and correct those who teach any other knowledge of God
- To rescue and reclaim the faithful who have tripped and fallen along the way

The Apostle Peter wrote the epistle of 2 Peter from Rome near the end of his life (about 65-67 AD) likely to the same Gentile Christians in churches scattered throughout the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey). Those Gentile Christians have received faith of equal standing with the Jews, through the righteousness given them through Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. Though many modern commentators deny Petrine authorship, there is no reason to do so and the traditional view should be maintained. In his first epistle, Peter wrote the churches to encourage them how to live holy and Christian lives in the midst of suffering caused by those outside the church. His second letter (similar to Jude) seeks to warn Christians about the threat of false teachers within the church. The key theme running through this short letter is the knowledge of God. The best way for Christians to recognize and reject false teaching is to grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. The theme of the book can be summarized as: ‘Grow in Grace and Knowledge.’