



“Divine Power for Life and Godliness”

2 Peter 1:1-7

Sermon Date: February 28th, 2016

Reflections on Sunday’s Sermon

Prayer

As you begin your study this week, spend some time thanking God for giving us the wonderful gift of His Word. Thank Him specifically for the book of 2 Peter and its central message of God’s grace transforming and empowering believers to live righteous and fruitful lives even in the face of opposition. Ask that He would begin to stir in your heart a love of this great letter and that He would open your eyes to the wonderful truths that are laid out in it. Pray that He would refresh your soul and renew your mind as you study this short, but profoundly encouraging, book.

Scripture

2 Peter 1:1–7 – (English Standard Version)

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

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

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

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, *4* by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. *5* For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, *6* and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, *7* and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

Understanding and Applying

1. Peter begins with what appears to be a fairly standard opening greeting. However, as commentator Mark Johnston points out, “with God there are no wasted words. So even the most ordinary and familiar words are loaded with an altogether different weight as God speaks into the situation his people face. Far from being a mere formality, these words of greeting are an integral part of the message.” What are some of the things Peter says in these first two verses that seem to be an integral part of his overall message? Why is it a meaningful opening to the letter?
2. In verses 3-4, Peter jumps right into the body of his letter by reminding believers of what God has provided for them in order that they might live the life He has called them to. Why would the reminders in verses 3 and 4 have been a great encouragement to believers facing all sorts of trials and persecutions in Peter’s day (2 Corinthians 9:8)? In what ways are you encouraged by those reminders?
3. There are a number of profound truths regarding salvation and what God has done for us contained in the first 4 verses of this passage. What are those truths and how do they serve to confirm Peter’s statement in verse 1 that the faith of every believer is on equal footing, and of equal value, before God (also refer to Romans 10:10-13 and Ephesians 2:8-9)? Why is it so important to keep these truths at the forefront of our minds as we walk through this life?
4. There are many “precious and very great promises” (v.4) granted to us in this passage and throughout all the pages of Scripture. Take a few minutes to think about some of the precious promises contained in His Word and write down those that immediately come to your mind. What are some of the specific promises we have regarding the call for believers to be Christ-like in our lives (for examples refer to John 14:15-17, 16:5-15 and Ephesians 3:20-21)?

Introduction to 2 Peter – (Taken from the ESV Study Bible)

Author and Title

Within 2 Peter itself there is strong evidence for authorship by the apostle Peter. In 1:1 the author claims to be “Simeon Peter . . . apostle of Jesus Christ.” Moreover, he claims to have been an eyewitness of the transfiguration (1:16–18; cf. Matt. 17:1–8), an event where Peter is featured prominently in the Gospel accounts. If someone other than Peter wrote the letter under his name, as some scholars have claimed, it would be a case of deliberate deception, especially given the author’s claims to have witnessed the transfiguration. But there is no historical evidence in support of such a theory. Furthermore, writing in another person’s name was condemned among early Christians (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2; 3:17).

Some have suggested that the literary style of 2 Peter, which differs from that of 1 Peter, indicates an author other than Peter. But Peter may have used a secretary to help write this second letter, which would not affect the genuineness of his authorship if he ultimately approved what was written.

Scholars have also questioned Petrine authorship of 2 Peter because of the similarities between chapter 2 of this letter and the book of Jude. But this is not a problem for apostolic authorship, since Peter may have included in his letter elements from Jude that he thought would be helpful for his readers. It also could have worked the other way, with Jude using Peter’s letter as *his* source. The parallels are close but almost never exact, so it is difficult to sort out the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude with any degree of certainty.

It is reasonable in light of all the evidence, and clearly supported by the claims of the letter itself, to conclude that the apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter.

Date

Peter probably wrote this letter from Rome not too long before his martyrdom, sometime during A.D. 64–67. Elements within the letter lead many scholars to conclude that Peter wrote during a time of persecution by Rome (perhaps during the persecution by Nero, who died in A.D. 68), while Peter himself was in a Roman prison awaiting imminent execution (cf. 1:12–15). The dating of the letter, then, depends largely on the dating of Peter’s death.

Theme

Second Peter teaches that the grace of God in Christ truly transforms and empowers Christians to live righteously, even in the face of opposition. This grace, introduced in 1:2–4, serves as the foundation for the remainder of the exhortations. The indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. 1:4, which characterizes Christians as “partakers of the divine nature”) produces virtuous “qualities” in followers of Christ (1:8–12), which in turn results in fruitful lives.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Peter writes this brief, final reminder to the churches so that his readers will by God’s grace live a life that is pleasing to God. In doing so, Peter must also combat the false teachers who were apparently exerting pressure on the churches to depart from the true knowledge of Christ (see esp. ch. 2). The false teaching is not only a theological challenge but also a moral one, holding forth some form of sexual permissiveness as a legitimate Christian lifestyle. While the false teaching can be described based on what Peter writes, it is historically impossible to identify who the false teachers were. For example, there is no clear historical evidence that these teachers were Gnostic or proto-Gnostic.

It is also impossible to identify with certainty the churches Peter is addressing. The leading historical candidates are the churches of Asia Minor, for Peter wrote his first letter to these churches (1 Pet. 1:1–2), and in this letter Peter mentions that this is his second letter to these same people (2 Pet. 3:1).

Key Themes

1. God, through his grace in Jesus Christ, has granted to Christians the privilege of partaking of the divine nature. 1:2–4
2. God’s grace results in godliness. 1:5–15
3. The revelation of truth in Christ (and in Scripture, 1:19) is sure because it is from God and not from man-made myths. 1:16–21
4. False teachers are bound over for destruction at the hand of God. 2:1–10
5. False teachers are ethically bankrupt. 2:11–22
6. Believers must endure in the face of opposition, knowing that they live in the last days. 3:1–13
7. The Lord is patient with his creation, but will surely return in judgment like a thief in the night. 3:8–10
8. God rescues the righteous. 2:7–9; 3:13–18

History of Salvation Summary

Christians are to hold fast to the truth in Christ while patiently awaiting the second coming.

Literary Features

The primary form is the epistle, with its usual elements. Partly on the basis of 1:13–14, where Peter asserts that he will soon depart this life, it is customary to view 2 Peter as adhering to some of the conventions of the farewell discourse. Motifs that belong to that genre include the author’s (a) announcing that he is near the end of his earthly life, (b) reminding his followers of what he has taught them, (c) commanding his followers how to live, and (d) predicting what will happen in the future. In a farewell discourse, a leader has his last chance to influence his followers in the right direction for the sake of the movement in which he has been a guiding light. Second Peter is also filled with famous proverbs and aphoristic statements, vivid poetry and imagery, and an eschatological (end-time) discourse (ch. 3).

Much of the letter falls into place if one grasps that Peter’s horror at false teaching (see esp. ch. 2) is set over against the reliability of God’s prophetic word (1:19–21; 3:1–2). These two motifs converge in the vision of the last chapter, where biblical prophecy about the return of Christ is aggressively offered as a rebuttal of scoffers (false teachers) who denigrate biblical prophecy. In 2 Peter, true and false teaching engage in a combat of huge proportions.¹

¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (pp. 2416–2417). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.