

# **Exploring 2 Peter**

**Jacob Jasin**

## PREFACE

When we repent and put our faith in Christ, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God forgives our sins and justifies us in Christ. God justifies us on the basis of Christ's righteousness is imputed or credited to us. God gives us a new life and a new identity in Christ. He adopts us as his children. His Holy Spirit dwells in us and sanctifies us as God's holy people—renewing us completely after the image of God and enabling us more and more to die to sin and to live to righteousness. He wants us to make every effort to work alongside him in our sanctification. He is preparing us to live in holiness in Heaven. As we wait for Christ to return and glorify us, our main purpose for life is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

Soli Deo Gloria  
Jacob Jasin  
Birmingham, AL  
February 2018

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## **Introduction**

2 Peter is a letter written by the Apostle Peter with a special purpose to strengthen the faith of the believers and to instruct them in dealing with false teachings that attempted to corrupt the truth of God and the believers' faith in him. The letter was written between A.D. 65-68.

## **Lesson 1 – The Christian Life: Our Justification**

### **Read 2 Peter 1:1-2**

How does Peter identify himself (v.1)?

A servant is usually a temporary worker. Peter identifies himself as a bond-servant of Christ. The Greek word is "doulos" which means bond-servant or slave. A bond-servant is permanently owned by his master.

What is the significance of being a permanent bond-servant of Christ?

How does Peter identify his readers (v.1)?

Faith is a gift of God to all believers. We have obtained faith from God. We do not produce faith on our own, but it is given as a gift of God's grace. Our faith in Christ makes us equal before God. As believers, we have equal standing before God because we equally receive the righteousness of Christ as a gift. When we believe and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God justifies us. He forgives our sins and accepts us as righteous because Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. We are equally justified in Christ.

Peter also identifies Christ as "our God and Savior." Peter emphasizes the deity of Christ as God and Christ's equality with God the Father.

Why are grace and peace important subjects in the life of Christians (v.2)?

How does receiving grace and peace relate to growing in the knowledge of God and of Christ (v.2)?

### **Read 2 Peter 1:3-11**

What has God's divine power granted to us (v.3)?

As God's people, our lives are all about godliness, being obedient to God and pleasing him with our thoughts, words, and actions. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live in faithfulness and has granted us everything we need to pursue godliness in our lives.

Godliness is accomplished through knowing God intimately, having a personal and close relationship with him. The more we know God and the closer we are to him, the godlier we become.

What does “[God] called us to his own glory and excellence” mean (v.3)?

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30).

What are God’s “precious and very great promises” for us (v.4)?

The implication of being spiritually born-again, being justified in Christ, and receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is that we become “partakers of the divine nature” (v.4). As God’s children, he is making us to be like him in holiness and godliness.

What is our responsibility as God’s children (v.5-7)?

To “make every effort” is to work alongside the Holy Spirit who guides us. We need to be obedient to his guidance, so that we can healthily grow in godliness.

How does supplementing our faith with virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love look like in our daily lives (v.5-7)? Give examples for each of these characteristics.

How can we be effective and fruitful Christians (v.8)?

What is the impact to us if we lack these qualities (v.9)?

God has elected and called us to saving faith in Christ. God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:4-6). “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:30).

How do we make our “calling and election sure” (v.10)?

What has God promised all his people will receive (v.11)?

## Lesson 2 – The Christian Life: Our Sanctification (Part 1)

Read 2 Peter 1:1-11 for review.

### Read 2 Peter 1:12-15

What are the qualities that Peter always intend to remind the believers of (v.5-7, 12)?

As born-again believers, we have these qualities. “These qualities are yours and are increasing” (v.8). God is sanctifying us to increase or develop these qualities in us. Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace renewing us completely after the image of God, enabling us more and more to die to sin and to live to righteousness. Peter reminds us to “make every effort” (v.5) and to “be all the more diligent” (v.10) in our sanctification—being obedient and working alongside God.

Peter was aware that he would die soon for the sake of Christ. Therefore, he made every effort to admonish the believers about these things (v.13-15).

What can we learn from Peter’s sacrificial life for Christ’s people?

### Read 2 Peter 1:16-21

“The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” is not a devised myth (v.16). This phrase most likely refers to the second coming of Jesus, where he will come in power and glory. Peter was an eyewitness of Jesus’ majesty and glory. He was present at Jesus’ transfiguration. “... Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light” (Matthew 17:1-2).

What did God the Father give to Jesus and proclaim about him at his transfiguration (v.17)

Did Peter, James, and John hear the voice of God the Father (v.18)?

The prophetic word—the word of God spoken through the Old Testament prophets about Christ—is more authoritative and “more fully confirmed” than Peter’s own personal experience of seeing the glory and majesty of the Son of God (v.19).

What is the impact on us if we pay attention to the word of God (v.19)?

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). God’s word is “a lamp shining in a dark place.” It reveals the world’s sin and darkness as well as ours. If we pay attention to God’s word and repent, turning away from our sins and turning our hearts to God, he will forgive us and give us a new life in Jesus—“the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What can we understand about scripture prophecy (v.20-21)?

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible is the divine word of God that sanctifies us. There is nothing in the Bible that is originated of man. All scriptures are originated of God. Therefore, the Bible is without error and cannot err. The Bible alone is the rule of faith and practice for the Christian life.

How do you respond to liberal teaching that says the Bible contains high degree of religious insight but is not without error?

### **Read 2 Peter 2:1-3**

Whom shall we be careful of? What will they do (v.1)?

Not all people who go to church are true believers or born-again Christians. In fact, a church can be a good breeding ground for false teachers and false prophets. They arise from the fellowship of believers but they are not born-again Christians. All born-again Christians are in union with Jesus, who is the head of the church. False teachers and false prophets will not hide or stay silent forever. They will come out and speak out. Their purpose is to destroy the church by teaching false doctrines and destructive heresies. They will deny Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior and deny his redeeming work on the cross for his people. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Jesus has warned us, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

Why do you think “many will follow their sensuality”—sexual immorality behaviors (v.2)?

One significant negative impact they will bring is people mocking Christianity—“the way of truth will be blasphemed.” Those who call themselves Christians and follow the practice of sexual immorality will bring a bad reputation for Christianity and will dishonor the name of Christ. If those Christians do not repent from their sins and submit to the lordship of Christ, they may be false Christians.

How do you think false prophets and false teachers “will exploit you with false words” (v.3)?

Is their condemnation and destruction certain? What do “is not idle” and “is not asleep” mean (v.3)?

When Jesus returns, he will bring judgment and destroy all evils. “... they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Peter 4:5).

As Christ’s people, what will happen to us when he returns?

### **Lesson 3 – The Christian Life: Our Sanctification (Part 2)**

Read 2 Peter 1:12—2:3 for review.

#### **Read 2 Peter 2:4-9**

To illustrate the certainty of God’s judgment on all sinners, including false teachers, Peter gives three examples of God’s judgment from the past: (1) God’s judgment on rebellious angels, (2) God’s judgment on the sinners in the time of Noah, and (3) God’s judgment on the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What punishment did God give to the rebellious angels (v.4)?

The devil (Satan) is the leader of the rebellious angels (demons). Not all demons are chained. God has given permission to some of them to do the work of the devil in this world. Jesus encountered many demons in his ministry in this world. Jesus has promised a day of final judgment when he returns.

What punishment did God bring to the sinners in the time of Noah (v.5)?

What punishment did God bring to the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah (v.6)?

What sins did the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah commit that brought God’s wrath and judgment on them (v.7-8)?

God took Lot out of the city and saved him. God did not bring his judgment to Sodom and Gomorrah until Lot was in a safe place. “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials” (v.9). Just as God saved Lot, he keeps us safe from the wickedness in this world. God continues to sanctify us in this world until he glorifies us in heaven. God preserves his saints. “... he [God] who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

We should never forget that God hates sin. Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God’s law in any way. The consequence of sin against God is death. All of us deserve to die under God’s wrath. However, Jesus died bearing the wrath of God for the punishment of our sins as our substitute. God killed his own son, so that he can rescue us. We should never forget the immensity of God’s grace for us.

Knowing that God hates sin, how should we live our lives as his people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ?

#### **Read 2 Peter 2:10-22**

What specific sins did the false teachers commit that bring certainty of God’s punishment on them (v.10)?

These false teachers apparently spoke blasphemous words against angels. They despised the authority of angels—both good and evil angels. Unlike these false teachers, the good angels do not even pronounce blasphemous judgment against the evil angels before the Lord (v.10-11).

Jude wrote similar statements about false teachers, “Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you’” (Jude 1:8-9).

What were the evil characteristics of these false teachers (v.12)?

What other sins did they commit (v.13-14)?

The false teachers “followed the way of Balaam.” Balaam was a bad prophet who was willing to curse Israel for the king of Moab in exchange for money. God miraculously enabled Balaam’s donkey to speak, warning Balaam of an angel with his sword drawn to kill him (v.15-16).

What does Peter liken these false teachers to (v.17)?

How did the false teachers try to deceive “those who are barely escaping from those who live in error”—new Christians or those who were not yet well-grounded in faith—to sin against God (v.18)?

Why can false teachers not give spiritual freedom to other people (v.19)?

The false teachers apparently professed to be Christians and had some knowledge about the gospel and Jesus Christ. In the beginning, they seemed to follow how other Christians lived their lives as followers of Jesus Christ, but then they entangled and returned to their former lifestyle. This proved that they were not spiritually born-again Christians. They had never truly repented from their sins and put their faith in Jesus. They professed to be Christians but they never possessed saving faith. They were superficial and false Christians (v.20).

Why was their condition worse than before (v.21)?

What does Peter liken the apostasy of these false teachers to (v.22)?

2 Thessalonians 2 tells us about the coming of *the great apostasy*—a world-wide rejection against God. Many people have been led astray from “the way of righteousness”—the way of God—through false teachings in this world. We need to guard ourselves by getting well-grounded in God’s word. We also need to help one another to grow in God’s word and to protect ourselves from false teachings.

Do you have a daily schedule to spend time in a personal prayer and Bible reading?

## Lesson 4 – The Christian Life: Our Glorification

Read 2 Peter 2:4-22 for review.

### Read 2 Peter 3:1-7

In both letters (1 Peter and 2 Peter), Peter reminded his readers to live in faithfulness to Christ as they waited for his return. Peter repeated what he wrote in 1:13, "... to stir you up by way of reminder." He wanted his readers to seriously pay attention to his admonition for them (v.1-2).

Who will come *in the last days*—the period between Jesus' first coming and his second coming—(v.3)?

The scoffers are false teachers who are driven by their own sinful desires and sensual appetites.

How will they scoff the return of Christ (v.4)?

"The fathers" refer to the Old Testament forefathers or the first generation of Christians.

What fact do they deliberately overlook (v.5-7)?

In the time of Noah, God punished the sinfulness of mankind by sending a flood to cover the world and to wipe out all human beings. Peter emphasizes the divine power of the word of God. By his word, God created the universe. By his word, God destroyed the world and then restored it. By his word, God has also been storing the world for the coming fire and judgment.

### Read 2 Peter 3:8-12

What important fact should we not forget (v.8)?

For us, one day and one thousand years are very much different. This is not the case for God. Unlike us, God is eternal and is not bound by time. Jesus will return for sure. False teachers scoff and deny his return, but we should not be influenced by them.

What is the reason that Jesus has not returned yet (v.9)?

Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). Jesus is now giving time for all his sheep—his chosen people—to repent and put their faith in him. When all his people have come to him, he will return.

How does Peter describe *the day of the Lord*—the day of Jesus' return (v.10)?

“The heavens” and “heavenly bodies” refer to the universe including the sun, the moon, and the stars. Jesus will come at the time that we do not expect. He will bring judgment to the world, as well as destroy the earth and recreate a new heaven and a new earth for his people to dwell.

How should we live our lives in the light of the coming of Christ and his judgment (v.11-12)?

### **Read 2 Peter 3:13-18**

Since we will live with God in holiness for eternity in the new heaven and the new earth, we should *be diligent* to live our lives on earth without blemish and in peace with God and other people (v.13-14).

What does *being diligent* to live in holiness and godliness look like?

While waiting for Christ to return, we should use our time to bring people to salvation in him, thanking him for his patience for not bringing the judgment immediately. Many of our family members and friends have not believed in the Lord. We can intentionally pray for them and share the gospel with them (v.15).

Do you have a regular schedule to pray for your unbelieving family members or friends?

Do you currently have someone with whom you want to share the gospel?

Peter acknowledges that his letters and Paul’s letters are inspired by God. They are *Scriptures* (sacred writings) and are as equally authoritative as the Old Testament Scriptures (v.16).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

What does “take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability” mean (v.17)?

How do we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v.18)?

To grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ means to have a heart for Christ. As Christ’s people, we need to have all our thoughts saturated deeply by his love and grace for us, which will consequently form a heart of profound adoration for him in us, and our words and actions will reflect that profound adoration and bring much glory to him as a result. To glorify him is the main purpose of our lives.

“To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

## Resources

*Acts to Revelation*. Matthew Henry's Commentary, vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publisher, 2000.

Sproul, R.C., ed. *The Reformation Study Bible*. Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005.

*The Westminster Standards*. Suwanee, GA: Great Commission Publications, 2011.