

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF II PETER

For the past couple of weeks, we have been looking at the man the Bible calls “Simon Peter.” Why? Primarily for **two** reasons. **1) First, to encourage us!** When we see the **strengths**—and weaknesses; and the **successes**—and failures of Peter, we are reminded that if God can **change** and **transform** and **use** Peter, He can do the same **with** and **for** us!

2) Second, to help us **better understand** what God **used Peter to write!** God the Holy Spirit supernaturally influenced men—like Peter—to write God’s Words—even while the writers themselves maintained their own individual **styles and personalities**. The **personality** of Peter—and his **experiences**—come out in what he wrote so the more we know **about him**, the better we can understand what he wrote!

And since we **now know** a little bit about Simon Peter, this morning we are going to **officially** begin our study on the book of II Peter. **If you** were to sit down and read the book—actually a letter—in **one sitting**, it would take you between 5 and 7 minutes. **If I were** to read the entire book to you **out loud** right now, it would probably take me about 10! I’m not going to do that, but I want to **encourage you**—starting tomorrow (or even today, if you want)—to **read through the book of II Peter** once per day—every day—for the next week.

Why? Because I believe you will get more out of the messages if you are reading ahead of time what I will be preaching on! Here’s some other things that will probably happen as you read through the book.

- 1) You will begin to see the **“Big Picture”** of the whole book and how it all fits together.
- 2) You will also see **certain words** that are repeated throughout the book.
- 3) There **will be questions** about what you read that you will want to have the answers to.
- 4) And you will hopefully see that the writer had a **reason for writing**—a theme (or themes)—that he was emphasizing in what he wrote that ties the whole book together.

So what is the **theme** of II Peter? **How do you take a book** of the Bible—even one that has only 3 chapters—and boil it down to a **sentence or two**? That is not an easy thing to do—and there are obviously differences of opinion! Here’s what I came up with for the **theme of II Peter**:

“Pursue growth to protect against error—and to be prepared for Christ’s return.” Shortening that up—and to give our series a title—I’m going to call it: “II Peter in Three Words: Working, Warning, and Watching.”

Let’s turn now to II Peter 1 and follow along as I read verses 1-7.

1. Background

--We know **from 1:14-15**, Peter is near the end of his life and will soon be martyred. Last week we saw in John 21 that Jesus told Peter his hands would be “stretched forth in death”—a likely reference to being crucified!

--We know **from history** that Peter was killed during the reign of Nero—around A.D. 68—so this letter was **probably written** in the AD 66-67 timeframe. **Where** did Peter write the letter **from**? We are not told, but some suggest **Rome** since that is where history says he was martyred.

--**How old** was Peter when he was killed? Peter was born approximately 1 BC—meaning he was 68 or 69 when he died.

--That means Peter would have met Jesus when he was roughly 27 years old—making him about 3 years **younger** than Jesus.

--It also means that Peter lived roughly **38 years after** the crucifixion—and resurrection—of Jesus!

2. The person writing. Back to vs 1. In Peter’s **first** letter—the book of **I Peter**—he begins with these words: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...” Here in **II Peter**, he refers to himself as “**Simon Peter**, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ....” Why the difference? We aren’t told so we can’t say for sure!

But...since **every word** in Scripture is inspired, **every word** is obviously important. So... let’s think through what Peter calls himself.

First, he calls himself.... A. Simon

Why does Peter call himself Simon? Are you ready; this is pretty profound?!

Peter called himself “Simon” because that **was his name!**

Mark 1:16 “Now as He [Jesus] walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw **Simon** and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.”

Mark 1:29 “And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of **Simon** and Andrew, with James and John.”

Simon, then, was Peter’s name **before** he met Jesus. In fact, we are told that **Jesus is the one** who gives Simon the name “Peter.”

Mark 3:16 “And Simon He [Jesus] **surnamed Peter;**”

Luke 6:14 “Simon, (whom He [Jesus] also **named Peter,**) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,”

So why would Peter refer to himself by his “**old**” name—Simon—roughly **40 years after** Jesus had given him his **new** name? The Bible doesn’t say so we can only guess. I like the suggestion made by **Alexander Nisbet**, though: “it is very necessary to **carry with us to the end of our time** the sensible remembrance of **what we were before Christ** manifested Himself to us, and of **what His grace has made us**, that we may go to Heaven both humble and thankful.” (*An Exposition of 1 & 2 Peter* [Banner of Truth], p. 222; cited by Steven Cole <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-1-foundation-our-faith-2-peter-11-2>).

Good thought, isn’t it? Don’t forget **what you were** before Christ saved you—but don’t dwell on **just that!** Remember, too, how God’s grace **has changed you!** Remembering **both** will keep us humble—and help us be grateful!

“Simon” is not the only way he referred to himself, though. He also called himself... B. Peter

He called himself **Peter** because that is the surname—the “nickname”—that Jesus had given him. We already noted that in a couple of verses we looked at; **John 1:42** is another:

“And he [Andrew] brought him [Peter] to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art **Simon** the son of Jona: thou **shalt be called Cephas**, which is by interpretation, A stone.”

Wait a minute, Pastor! I thought Jesus called him “**Peter!**” Where did “**Cephas**” come in?

--“Cephas” is an **Aramaic** name that means “a stone” as stated here in John 1:42.

--“Peter” is a **Greek** name that means the same thing: **rock/stone!** Mark your spot here and turn to Matthew 16. We were in this chapter last week and I mentioned we would come back to **verse 18** in the future. Looks like the future is **today!** Let’s pick it up at vs 13 to lay the context; follow along as I read vs 13-18.

Verse 18 is one that is used to suggest that Peter was the **first Pope**. But is that **what it says?** Let’s break the verse down into smaller parts so we can better understand what Jesus is saying.

--“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter...”

As already mentioned, “Peter” comes from the Greek word “Petros” and means “rock.” Not only is it a **name**—it is also a **masculine noun**. But what is a **masculine** noun? **In English**, we don’t have a lot of **gender specific** nouns.

We do have some, though. Here are some **examples**.

1) What is an adult **female deer** called? A doe, right? A doe, then, is a **feminine** noun.

2) What is an adult **male deer** called? A buck! A buck, then, is a **masculine** noun.

Here are a couple more.

3) What is a **male** called who participates **in acting?** An actor! An actor, then, is a **masculine** noun.

4) What is a **female** called who participates **in acting?** An actress! So the word “actress” is a **feminine** noun.

What about “teacher.” Is a teacher a masculine noun—or a feminine noun?

Neither; right? Why? Because it can be used for a **male** teacher or a **female** teacher. It is not gender specific—meaning it is **neutral**. There, you’ve had your **English** lesson for the day 😊!

That was the easy part; now for your **Greek** lesson. Although **English** doesn't have very many gender-specific nouns, Greek **has a lot**. And some of them don't make sense—to us, anyway! Here are some examples.

--The word for “sea” in Greek is a **feminine** noun—even though a “sea” is not male or female.

--The word for “death” in Greek is a **masculine** noun—even though death is not specific to just men.

So why do I bring all this up? Glad you asked 😊!

Back to verse 18. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art **Peter**, and upon this **rock** I will build my church...”

--Okay, class, **what kind** of word is Peter/Petros? It is a **masculine noun**. Why is that significant?

Because if Jesus was building His church **on Peter**—and because Peter is a **masculine** noun—the “rock” Jesus refers to in the **next part** of the sentence also has to be a **masculine** noun.

--I think you'd agree that it **wouldn't make any sense** for Jesus to say, “Thou art **him**—and upon **her** I will build my church” if He wanted us to understand that He was building the church **on Peter**.

Guess what kind of word Jesus used for “rock”—“upon this **rock** I will build my church”? Jesus used the word “petra”—which is **feminine**! So, Jesus **really did say**, “Thou art **him**—and upon **her** I will build my church!”

In other words, Peter is **not the rock** the church would be built on because Jesus wasn't referring to Peter! But if **Peter is not** the “rock,” **what is** the “rock?” The “rock” is what **Peter said**: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **That** is the **rock**—the foundational truth—that Christ is building His church on—not Peter!

My apologies—**sort of** 😊—for the extended detour. Mt 16:18 is a very important—and often misunderstood—verse so I really felt the need to spend some time on it. Let's turn back to II Peter 1, vs 1.

“Simon Peter” a... C. A servant

Once again, it is interesting to consider that Peter did not refer to himself **as a servant** in his **first** letter—but he does so here in his **second** letter. Why? Again, we don't know why, but God had Peter refer to himself **as a servant** for us to notice—and, I believe—to **think about**.

But Peter doesn't just call himself **a servant**—he calls himself a “doul-os.” A “doul-os” is a “bond-slave”—someone who **belongs to someone else**. A bond-slave is someone **without any ownership rights** of their own—and was **used of believers** who willingly chose to live under Christ's authority as His devoted follower (HELPS Word-studies; Bible Hub).

--Peter called himself a **bond-slave** to Christ because he had **been redeemed** with the precious blood of Christ, he wrote in I Peter 1:18-19.

--Peter did not “deny the Lord that bought him” like false teachers did as seen in II Peter 2:1.

--And—according to 1:14-15—Peter knew that his life was about to end. It may have been that he had Jesus' words in mind—“well done, though good and faithful servant”—“doulos”—when he wrote this farewell.

What about us? We have been bought with the **same price**—and should be wanting to **hear the same proclamation from Christ** when we meet Him—but too often times we look at **service for God** as something optional...something we “volunteer for” ...something we can “take or leave,” so to speak.

Serving Christ is **not optional**—like adding your name to the snack sheet! It is a **transfer of ownership** to Christ—it is being a **bond-slave to Him**—because He paid our ransom! He bought us—with His own blood—from the penalty of hell! Although **Paul wrote** I Cor 6:19-20, **Peter lived** these verses!

I Cor 6:19-20 “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and **ye are not your own**? ²⁰ **For ye are bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

Peter was a bond-slave to Christ. **Are you?** If you're a blood bought, born-again child of God, you are not your own! We see Peter's old name—Simon—reminding us of what he was before he met Christ...and his new name—Peter—a strong, devoted follower of Christ...and the fact that he considered himself a bond-slave to Christ.

Lastly, Peter called himself... D. An apostle

Why did he refer to himself as an apostle? Because he was one! And he was one because God made him one! Can't spend much time on this one, but I want to bring **one vs** to your attention, **Gal 2:8** "(For He that wrought effectually **in Peter to the apostleship** of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)"

Paul is saying that **God** is the one who made **Peter** an apostle to the "circumcision" (Jews)—and God was the one who sent **Paul** to the Gentiles. God **did send Peter** to the house of Cornelius—a Gentile—as we noted last week in Acts 10, but Peter was **primarily** an apostle—meaning "sent one"—**to the Jews**.

By Peter reminding the readers of his apostleship, he was reminding them that what he wrote carried the **authority of God Himself**. Peter was giving them—and us—God's **authoritative Word**—not his opinions or suggestions! Oh how we all need to look at the Bible as **God's Words to us**—to study...and believe...and trust...and obey!

Back to vs 1. We've looked at the author—the person writing—but I want to end this morning with...

3. The people being written to

Who is Peter writing to? Who are **the recipients** of this letter? Look at II Peter **3:1**. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you" indicates that the second letter is to the **same group** he wrote the first letter to. **Who** did he write the **first** letter to? In **I Peter 1:1**, we see he wrote to "strangers"—meaning citizens of heaven that are just passing through—that are in these different provinces of Asia Minor.

But in his **second** letter, Peter expands it to "them that have obtained like precious faith..." "Faith" sometimes carries the idea of the **whole body of Christian doctrine**—and sometimes it refers to what we looked at not too long ago—"being fully persuaded that what God says, He will do" (Rom 4:21). But here, faith has to do with **saving faith**; in other words, salvation. We know that is the case here because it comes "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Let's break this verse down a little more.

A. Saving faith must be received

I'm so thankful for the **exactness** of the Word of God! The word "obtained" does not mean "earned" or "acquired by work." It means to **receive something**; to obtain something by divine will. In other words, it is **God-given**—not human-earned! It is not something given automatically, though—it must be **received**!

B. Saving faith is not a respecter of persons

What do I mean by that? Simply this—that saving faith is the **same for all**! In other words, those of us who have received **saving** faith have the **same kind** of saving faith that Peter—and the other apostles—had!

Does Peter say that? Yes, he does! He says that **our** precious faith is a "like precious faith with us"—meaning the apostles! There are no "levels" of salvation. The **way to be saved** is the same for all—and the **blessings of salvation** are the same for all. And all God's people ought to say, "Amen!" We'll talk more about those blessings when we get the "exceeding great and precious promises" referred to in verse 4.

Back to vs 1; notice again the middle of the verse: "...to them that have obtained like precious faith with us **through the righteousness of God** and our Saviour Jesus Christ." We see here that...

C. Saving faith is through the righteousness of God

I don't know that it can be written any plainer than what is written here—we receive the **same saving faith** that Peter and the other apostles had "**through the righteousness** of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

--Through the righteousness **of who?** God and Christ—not **us or our** righteousness. Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..."

--What is the righteousness **of God?** I've said this a number of times before—and maybe this is bit too simplistic—but when you hear the word "righteousness," think "**rightness** with God." How do we become "right with God?" I think you'd agree that **God decides** how we become right with Him—not us!

--What is **God's way** for us to become right with Him? Get rid of all our past sin—and become perfect! But that's impossible, Pastor! To which I reply, Yes; it is impossible **for men**! But it is not impossible **for God**!

First, Jesus coming to earth, living a righteous life, and dying as our substitute took care of our **past sin**.

I Pet 2:24 “Who His own self bare **our sins** in His own body on the tree”

Rev 1:5b “Unto Him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins** in His own blood,”

So the death of Christ on our behalf satisfied the payment for our past sins.

Step 1, then, is done—our past sins are taken care of, and we are “saved from wrath” as the songwriter (and Bible) says.

But how can we **become pure**? How can sinful people **become perfect** so that we can dwell in the presence of a holy God some day? We can’t—unless God **credits to our account** the righteousness—the perfectness—of Someone who is perfect! And that’s what God does, doesn’t He?

When we receive Christ, God **takes our sin** and counts it as being placed on Jesus! But He also takes **Jesus’ perfectness**—and counts it as being placed upon us! We sing about that very thing in the song “Rock of Ages” where the last part of the first stanza reads: “Be of sin the double cure—save from wrath, and make me pure!”

That truth is not just in a song, though—it is also in the Bible!

II Cor 5:21 “For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we **might be made the righteousness** of God in Him.”

What about you? Do you have saving faith? Saving faith is a gift from God—and is based on what Jesus did for us on the cross. That is why we need to **have** Him—not just know about Him!

I John 5:12 “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

Do you **have** the Son? If not, why not receive Him today. II Cor 6:2 says, “...Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

So what would God have us do in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, make sure you are saved. Make sure you are counting on God’s way to be right with Him—not your own way. What is God’s way?

--To have Jesus as your sin-“payer”—and your “perfectness” giver!

--So the most important question is: Do you have the Son?

2. Second, how do you view yourself?

--Remember what you used to be and allow that to humble you—but don’t dwell solely on that!

--Be thankful for what God has done in you to change you. It is what He has done—not what we have done.

3. Third, do you view yourself as a slave to Christ? I said this already, but I’m going to say it again:

--If you’re a blood bought, born-again child of God, you are not your own—you belong to Christ!

--Start living for Him, then—not yourself!

“Jesus calls us o’er the tumult of our life’s wild, restless sea;

Day by day His sweet voice soundeth saying, “Christian, follow Me.”

As we sing, let’s make this song a dedication of ourselves to Him!