

## 2 Peter: Growing in Grace!



This is Exit 22 in the New Testament as we travel down Route 66. If you are starting from the book of Genesis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter is our 61<sup>st</sup> exit. If you will remember, John concluded his gospel by telling us that Jesus fixed breakfast for His disciples after the resurrection on the bank of a sea. The disciples bring their boat inland, Jesus has breakfast cooked, and He turned to Peter and asked three times, "Do you love Me more than these?" Peter said, "Yes Lord, you know I love you." The Bible says it grieved Peter that Jesus asked him three times. In that dialog, Jesus tells Peter to feed His sheep, tend to His lambs, and tend to His sheep. Then He said, "Verily, verily" (KJV), the ESV says "Truly, truly." That just doesn't sound like verily, verily, does it? What He literally says is "Amen, Aman." Jesus is basically saying, *Get your spiritual antenna up, Peter; I am going to tell you something really important. When you were young, you could dress yourself and go where you wanted to go, but when you get old, someone else will dress you and will walk you to a place you do not want to go.* Then, John puts a parenthesis in his writing because he is telling us that these are now going to be his own words, he said, "This He spoke, signifying by what death Peter would die." Peter knew what Jesus was saying. When it dawned on him that Jesus had just prophesied how he would die, Jesus looked at him and said, "Follow Me!" Peter looked and saw John, the one who had leaned on Jesus' breast that night He said one

of you will betray Me; so Peter asked, what about him? Jesus said, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

I believe that experience with Jesus shaped Peter's life, and it shaped his ministry. We know those three questions to him came out of a strong conviction by Jesus because, earlier, Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times. In his call to follow Jesus, to love Him, Peter is to feed His sheep and tend to the flock of Christ, which is the Church of Jesus Christ. This second letter comes out of that call to not only love Jesus, but to follow Him. In this letter, Peter is not only trying to feed the sheep, he is trying to tend the sheep. He knows he is getting ready to die and Jesus' words are going to come true.

Scripture does not record the death of Peter, but history does. Tradition says when they came for Peter they were going to crucify him. When he realized he was going to die by crucifixion like Jesus Christ, His Lord, died; the One he had denied three times, he knew he wasn't worthy to die that way, so he asked to be crucified upside down. He told them he was not worthy to die the way His Savior did.

So Peter knows he is getting ready to die and he is concerned. He is concerned about false teaching that is getting ready to come into the Church because he realizes that when he dies, the apostolic age will come to a conclusion. He is worried about what is going to happen to the Church when they no longer have an apostle writing to them and false teachers come into the Church. So Peter determines that until he dies, he will keep reminding them of things they already know. He said I am not going to tell you anything new, but I am going to stir your mind by reminding you of what you already know, so that when I am gone and the false teachers come in, it will be easy for you to remember these things.

Years and years ago, our church sent my wife and me to Jacksonville Florida to a pastor's conference where we got to sit at the feet of some of the nation's greatest preachers. They would bring them from literally all over the world. There was a man who would speak every year that I had

never heard of until that conference, but he was one of my favorites. He just had a depth about his preaching, in a very simple way. He was coming to the conclusion of a sermon and he was wowing us with his insight into the Word of God. When he got ready to conclude and told us he was stopping, a tall and slender man stood up in the balcony and hollered, "Don't quit; tell us more!" I can't imagine concluding a sermon and someone telling you not to quit and they want to hear more. Try that sometime, and we will see if I like that. 😊 Do you know what the speaker did? I believe he was in the Spirit when he looked and pointed at that man, and he said, "Sir, sit down...I have already told you more than you will ever live up to already, so why should I tell you anything more?" You do realize that most of us already know enough. The problem is not in what we know; the problem is we are not living up to what we already know is true.

Peter writes this letter, and now, there is an entire book in the Bible that is not going to tell us anything that we don't already know. So why is it in the Bible? It is because God understands many of us need to be reminded. We need to be stirred up in our minds to remember the things we have already been taught, because there are false teachers who have already infiltrated the Church, and we need to be prepared. Let's read 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter chapter 1:12-15.

## **Scripture**

***"Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things."***

You may have traveled somewhere before, but when you get ready to go again you don't remember the route you traveled on without using a map or a GPS. We have made the journey before, but we forget the name of

the highways or roads. That is why Peter is doing what he is doing. Many of us don't remember what we know. So there is nothing wrong with Peter doing what he is doing. Peter is writing with such passion that he wants to make sure the Church remembers what they already know and what he says in the letter. So I have arranged this outline very simply, you can't miss it. When we finish 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and someone asks you down the road what 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter is about, you will remember and be able to tell them about the trip you took on Route 66, Exit 61 of the Bible, Exit 22 of the New Testament.

### **Challenge to Confirm**

We are going to break chapter 1 into two parts. The first is to challenge and confirm your call and election. (Chapter 1:3-11)

### **Certainty**

The second part of chapter 1 deals with the certainty prophetic word. (Chapter 1:12-21)

### **Condemnation**

The next point is the condemnation of false teachers. (Chapter 2) This is the main purpose for the writing of the book. We are supposed to remember what we already know because false teachers are going to come into the Church.

Many preachers prepare sermons using memory techniques. The perfect sermon only has three points, and if it is really good, they all begin with the same letters, like the C's in this outline. They didn't do this in the Biblical world, but one of the things they used to help you remember was a technique called a Chiasm. They would arrange the material where there would be one thing that didn't have a corollary to it and that would be the main point. Peter opens up by talking about being diligent and then prophets. It ends talking about prophets and then diligence. But there is one thing in the Chiasm that Peter uses that does not have a corollary, and

that is false teaching, which is the middle of the book, chapter 2. In Peter's desire to tend the sheep, his desire to feed the sheep, his desire to be true to his Lord up to the moment of His death, he wants us to understand that after the apostles are no longer writing letters, we have to be discerning of who we trust. Who will you base your truth on? Who are you going to listen too? He will tell us not to listen to the false teachers; they will lead you astray.

### **Coming**

Now the fourth point is the coming of the day of the Lord. (Chapter 3:1-13)

### **Command**

The last point is a command to grow. (Chapter 3:14-18)

Remember these five points: the challenge, the certainty, the condemnation, the coming, and the command.

## **Challenge to Confirm our Call and Election**

Peter like Paul believed in a divine side of salvation where God is completely sovereign and He took the initiative in our salvation before the foundation of the world. Now many people reject that teaching today. One of the reasons they reject it is on the basis that it sounds like if there is a divine side of salvation where God is sovereign, then that must mean man doesn't have a choice in his salvation. That is the logic, but that is wrong. Scripture teaches there is a divine side of salvation where God is sovereign, but there is also a human side of salvation. God taking the initiative in salvation does not cancel out man's choice in his salvation, but because of God's choice in salvation, man must respond to God's choice by making a

choice of his own. So there is a divine side of salvation and a human side of salvation.

Peter begins his letter to the people he is writing to in chapter 1:1, saying, *"To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."* If you have this idea that the apostles were an elite people and they knew it, you have missed it. No, Peter is not writing from a place of superiority as an apostle. He is not looking down on the recipients as being inferior. He is writing to people he believes are on equal footing with him. They are his peers. When it comes to salvation, we are equal in our standing with the Lord. Even though our call to service may make us a little different, in our call to salvation, we are equal.

Beginning in verse 3, Paul tells all of us who are of faith that *"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us... by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises."* Right at this very moment, if you are a believer in Christ, you have everything you need when it comes to life and godliness. You don't need another thing. Is that a reality in your life? At this very moment, you and I know how to live; we know how to be godly. That has been granted to us by God, but it started the moment we believed in Christ Jesus.

- **Supplementing our Faith**

Then in verse 5, Paul says to confirm your call and election to salvation, I need you to be supplementing your faith. This word, *"supplement,"* literally means 'to add to.' I don't honestly know why Peter would use this word, because I think of him as a fisherman, rugged, outdoors, manly. But this word comes to us out of the world of art. It comes to us from the world of the theatre. It is the word that talks about the director of the play. The director of the play not only coached the actors, but they actually gave of their own resources to fund the play. If you believe that faith is enough, you missed it. Faith is not enough. I mean faith is enough to bring you into

a right relationship with God, but your life didn't end there; it didn't stop there. You didn't reach the pinnacle there. Life just started for you. Now we are to add to our faith. We are to supplement our faith with:

### **1. Virtue**

This word means 'excellence.' To our excellence, we add:

### **2. Knowledge**

Once we have knowledge, we add:

### **3. Self-Control**

This is self-discipline. It is the picture of an athlete who is running for the prize, and he realizes that he can't eat everything from the smorgasbord because it might affect him down the road, so he pushes back from the chocolate pie. While everyone else is going to the lake, he is in the gym. That is hard. To your self-discipline, to your self-control, you add:

### **4. Steadfastness**

This is that ability to remain under the training you are in for the glory of the Lord. To your steadfastness, you add:

### **5. Godliness**

I have wondered about the order in that one. Many of us aren't very godly when it comes to being steadfast. We don't smile; we frown. We are not an encourager; we are a discourager. We begin to complain and bellyache, to criticize. It is very ungodly. Isn't it amazing when it is easy and there's no pressure? It is harder when we begin to get squeezed. To godliness, you add:

### **6. Brotherly Affection**

This is a sincere love for brothers and sisters in the family. But it doesn't stop there.

To brotherly affection, you add:

## **7. Love**

Love not just for the family, love for all.

## **Certainty**

We have the lists, we have the supplements; how are you doing? Peter will say if you don't have all these qualities in your life, you are so near sighted you are blind. You just went to the spiritual eye doctor and he gave you an exam. Do you have 20/20 vision? That is what Peter expects; he is saying why are you looking at me like you are looking at me, you are supposed to know this! Peter is trying to say if you are not striving for this lifestyle of growing in sanctification in the Lord, you are blind. You are not seeing your salvation the way your salvation is presented to you, of what God has done for you in Christ. You have forgotten that you were purged from your former sin! This isn't even the point of the letter! This is just him starting off! He wants to make sure we see salvation the way salvation is meant to be seen, and that is our participation in it. We are in it because of what God has done for us in Christ, but once we are in, we don't stop at faith! We just keep supplementing, knowing that one day the door is going to fling open in eternity, and we are going to enter into the eternal Kingdom of God. That is why he is reminding us, because there are many of us who knew what was just said, but we have forgotten it. It is because we are not seeing salvation the way God wanted us to see our salvation.

Then, Peter says he didn't get what he has been reminding them of from a myth. In the Roman society, they were heavy into Greek mythology. You have heard of some of those myths (really weird stuff). Peter said that what he was delivering to them he didn't get from myths; he was an eyewitness because he was on the mountain with Jesus. When He transfigured and Moses and Elijah showed up, Peter was there on the mountain; he saw Him! Peter said he heard the voice, "*This is My beloved*



*Son, with whom I am well pleased."* It amazes me that Peter didn't quote that exactly the way it was said to him, because right before God said that, He told Peter to shut up! Peter had wanted to build a building (he was Baptist; we always want to build something!). Peter said let's build one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. God Himself said, Peter, hush! This is not a moment for you to be talking; this is a moment for you to be listening to My Son. I can't imagine what it would be like to get a letter from the man who sat at the feet of Jesus, and the words he is delivering are the very words he got from Jesus! You can trust that.

- **The Prophetic Word**

Peter just said he was getting ready to die and would do everything in his power to remind them of what they already know. Now, he says when he is gone, there will be a more sure word than his eyewitness account. That sure word is the prophetic word. As we close out chapter 1, Peter is going to show us why we can trust that after an apostle dies and we no longer get a letter from him to know how to live, we can still know how to live because we have something more sure than his word; it is the Old Testament Scripture themselves.

How can we trust the Bible? Peter says those men who wrote what they wrote didn't write it because it was their will to write it; they wrote it as they were carried by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we believe the Word of God is God's Word to us. So as a believer, our life must be grounded on the certainty of God's Word.

Let's look ahead for a minute. At the end of the letter in chapter 3:16, Peter will remind them that Paul has already written to them. He calls him "beloved Paul." He says that Paul is actually agrees with him on what he is writing about. Then, he says it is sometimes hard to understand Paul's writing, and because he is hard to understand, people take what he says and twist it to their own way of thinking as do they the other Scriptures. I have this thought that Peter puts the letters of Paul on the same level of authority as he does the other Scriptures. This means that Peter viewed

Paul as writing the very Word of God. Some scholars believe that Paul had already died at that time, so the Church is not going to get another letter from Paul, and they won't get another letter from Peter, so what do they build their life on? They build their life on the written Word of God.

## **Condemnation**

Peter says while these prophets were being led by the Holy Spirit in writing truth, there were some false prophets. In chapter 2, he says there are also some false teachers. He condemns false teachers with their false teaching. This chapter is so terrible to me I don't even want to talk about it. I don't like to study it, I don't want to do word studies on it, I don't want to see it in context, I don't want to see anything about it because it just turns my stomach. It makes me sick to know that there are people who come into the Church and they have their own selfish ambitions, their own selfish desires. They bring in teachings that destroy the Church, because what they are teaching is heretical, it is heresy. It does not lead people to Christ; it leads them away from Christ. They do not present the true Christ; they present a false Christ. And, they get a following; they can talk the talk. They are funny. They say things no one else says. They put a different twist on something that you have never heard before. The next thing you know, we are going, "Wow, they are smart!" Yet, God calls them a false teacher. One day He is going to destroy them. Peter gives the example that God did not spare the angels who sinned, He did not spare the ancient world when it sinned, and He did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah when they sinned. A false teacher of God's Word, a false teacher in the Church, will face the same judgement the angels, the ancient world, and Sodom and Gomorrah did...whoa!

We listen to some of them today. We listen to people who teach a contrary way of salvation other than God's grace through faith alone. We listen to people who do not believe salvation is solely based on the work of God in Christ, but it's what God did plus what you do. We listen to the people who deny the teaching of what Christ's death on the cross means for us, not

just in eternity, but right now. We listen and listen, and we can't tell the difference.

Peter tells us they are going to offer freedom, but what they are really going to do is enslave you to sin again. He states that if you are enslaved to sin, you are a sinner. He says if you have had the privilege of coming to know the truth, and then you turn and go back into sin, your second state is worse than your first state. It would have been better if you never heard the Word. He gives us a proverb: "*The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.*" Do you catch what this is saying? Be careful when you listen to teaching that somehow teaches you are free to sin rather than hearing what the Bible says. When you become a Christian, you are free not to sin.

## **Coming**

Then, Peter concludes with the coming of the Lord. He takes the prophecies of the prophets and the commandments of Jesus through the apostles and puts them on the same level, thus, our belief that the Old Testament and the New Testament are both are the Word of God. They both teach the return of Jesus. Peter is going to write the same thing Paul wrote, because Paul wrote to the church of Corinth that when Christ comes, the end comes. Now Peter, being a fisherman, writes the same thing, but he adds some flavor to that. He says by the way, the reason Christ hasn't come yet is not because He is not coming. Don't' think the Lord is slack concerning His promise. The reason He hasn't come yet is because God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Peter says when the Lord does come, the heavens and earth is going to dissolve. He knows when the Lord comes; there is no time for repentance. It's over! Some of you thought there were seven more years after He comes. Some of you thought there would be another thousand on top of that...no. When He comes, it is over. If the heavens dissolve and the earth dissolves, there will be no more time. Whoa, that is depressing! No, it is not. It is not depressing, because when the Day of the

Lord comes and God has His day, and time is no more; eternity begins, and He will create a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. We are waiting and hastening that day to come. I honestly just can't get my mind around that. It will be a kingdom where everything in the kingdom is right. I have lived down here so long I don't see much right. Can you imagine a kingdom where there is no wrong ever again? That is what we are looking for.

Because of that, we live holy and godly down here on earth. The reason we don't live ungodly or unholy, the reason we don't settle down here and act like this is all there is, is because we know this is temporal. It is going to pass away. We realize that one day we are going to enter the eternal Kingdom of God, and it changes the way you live. Just think about how it changes your life when you know someone is coming. If someone is going to come to our house, we clean the house. We get everything just right. Jesus is coming! If we believed He was coming, it would change the way we live. You wouldn't be caught dead doing some of the things you are doing if you knew Jesus was coming. We scoff at the scoffer who says Jesus isn't coming, and yet, the Church today lives as if He is not coming! He is!

## **Command**

Therefore, Peter concludes with a command to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is why we want to be growing disciples who make disciples!

Just a couple of weeks ago, I set my tomatoes. Because of the cold, wet spring, I didn't get to break my garden in time and I had rye grass on it. So I had my tomatoes in a little pot, and they were growing under the care of another. I finally got to set them when they were tall enough and they had little tomatoes on them; they looked good! But now, they don't look too good. They are stunted. They are just setting there. They have fertilizer in the ground, they have the sun, they have the rain, but they are just sitting there, not growing. I check them twice a day. I'm worried if

they are even alive. That is how some of us are, just sitting. You have the fertilizer of God's Word underneath you, you have the presence of His sunlight on you, and you just sit there! No growth, some would say you are dead. Peter would say you are just blind, forgotten you have been cleansed of sin.

If there were one adjective or participle that we could use to describe you, would it be growing? I have added excellence to my faith, knowledge to my excellence, self-control to my knowledge, steadfastness to my self-control, and godliness to my steadfastness. My tomatoes will pull out of it, they will. Do you know what sometimes happens in my garden? Later on in the season when it gets hot and dry, my tomatoes just quit, and that is where some of us, who have been walking with the Lord for forty or fifty years, are. We are in a drought and we are just surviving. Life's been hard, it's been rough, and we are just surviving. Yet you know what God wants on us, big, luscious fruit. Will you remember the challenge, the certainty, condemnation, the coming, and the command? Live up to what you already know is true. Today, just want to master what you already know to be true.