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## A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: 2 Peter 1:1-11

### 62. THE BOOK OF 2 PETER

A Dr. Congdon once approached Bible teacher R. A. Torrey, complaining he could get nothing out of his Bible study. “ *Please tell me how to study it so that it will mean something to me.*” “ *Read it,*” replied Dr. Torrey. “ *I do read it.*” “ *Read it some more.*” “ *How ?*” “ *Take some book and read it twelve times a day for a month.*” Torrey recommended 2 Peter. Dr. Congdon later said, “ *My wife and I read 2 Peter three or four times in the morning, two or three times at noon, and two or three times at dinner. Soon I was talking 2 Peter to everyone I met. It seemed as though the stars in the heavens were singing the story of 2 Peter. I read 2 Peter on my knees, marking passages. Teardrops mingled with the crayon colors, and I said to my wife, “ See how I have ruined this part of my Bible.” “ Yes,” she said, “ but as the pages have been getting black, your life has been getting white.*” The book of 2 Peter was an unusual book for R. A. Torrey to recommend for it has been viewed by some as the “ *dark corner,*” of the New Testament. As a result it is not often preached, studied, discussed or even quoted.

Yet the church of Jesus Christ ignores this epistle at its peril. For it would almost seem that 2 Peter was written specially for us at this crucial time in the twenty first

century. Let’s note a few things about the book that will help us in our study. Notice,

#### 1. THE CHARACTER OF THE BOOK:

“ *Simon Peter a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ,*” ( 1:1 ) Peter of course was the acknowledged leader and spokesman of the apostles and as such his name heads all the four New Testament lists of the Twelve. He dominates the gospel records and the first part of the Acts of the Apostles. After his appearance at the Jerusalem council ( Acts 15:7-12 ) Peter seems to disappear from the scene yet Scripture indicates that he was engaged in missionary travels. ( 1 Cor 9:5 Gal 2:11-21 1 Cor 1:12 ) One thing is certain,

##### (a) His Authorship is Questioned:

His authorship of this book. Some commentators raise three objections. (1) That the early writers seldom referred to this epistle. The church fathers were slow in giving it their acceptance, but this also applies to some of the other writings. (2) That the style and language of this letter is very different from the first, therefore it could not have been written by Peter. But the differences in language and style can be explained by the differences in theme. First Peter was written to help suffering Christians but Second Peter was written to expose false teachers. The two letters were written in different circumstances and for a different purpose dealing with different subjects. And yet there are similarities between the two. If you go through the two letters Peter keeps using the word

“ *precious.*” Everything is “ *precious,*” to Peter. Peter must have liked the word “ *precious,*” for he wrote about the “ *precious faith,*” ( 1:1 1 Pet 1:7 ) “ *the precious promises,*” ( 1:4 ) “ *the precious blood,*” ( 1 Pet 1:19 ) “ *the precious stone,*” ( 1 Pet 2:4, 6 ) and “ *the precious Saviour.*” ( 1 Pet 2:7 ) Would that not lead you to believe that it’s the same man who writes these two letters. (3) Another objection is, this could not have been written in Peter’s lifetime as Peter talks about Paul’s epistles, and all of Paul’s epistles had not been written then. ( 3:16 ) But surely the phrase in ( Ch 3 ) “ *all his epistles,*” refers to the epistles that had been written then. My .... this letter was written by Peter for the opening verse bears the name of Peter himself. Still again, Peter was an eye-witness of the Transfiguration ( Matt 17:1-9 ) And in ( Ch 3 ) it states that Peter had written the previous letter to the same people. (a) And,

**(b) His End is Near:**

Do you see what Peter says in ( 1:14 ) ? Do you recall what is recorded in John’s gospel ? The Risen Lord said to Peter “ *When thou wast young thou girdest thyself and walkest whither thou wouldest but when thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God.*” ( Jn 21:18-19 ) Peter was going to die as our Lord died on a cross. Tradition tells us that’s exactly what happened indeed when they came to take Peter he said “ *Crucify me with my head downwards my Master was crucified for me with His head upwards I am not worthy to die as He*

*died.*” Peter was martyred around A.D. 68 he wrote his first letter around A.D. 64-65 and possibly this letter shortly before his death. Thus 2 Peter and 2 Timothy have much in common. Both books are the last written by their authors. Both contain a passage on the subject of inspiration. ( 1:20 2 Tim 3:16 ) Both warn against apostasy ( 2 Pet 2: 2 Tim 3:1 ) And both men knew that they would die a martyrs death. ( 2 Tim 4:6 1:13-15 ) So here is Peter perhaps in prison, with his death imminent, writing to these believers who lived in a far flung region of the Roman Empire covering the area now belonging to Turkey. Now what is Peter’s concern as he writes this letter ? (1)

**(2) THE CONTRAST OF THE BOOK:**

For what a contrast this letter is from the first one. You see, this letter deals with a totally different situation from the first one. The readers are the same and its a few years later but now Peter feels the urgent need to address *dangers within the church.* There are two kinds of pressures that churches always face. Dangers from without and dangers from within. *In 1 Peter we see Satan as a roaring lion seeking to devour* for Peter’s theme is persecution. *In 2 Peter we see Satan as a serpent seeking to deceive.* Which do you think is the more dangerous ? Fierce persecution from without, or false teaching from within. Do you recall that when Paul was saying goodbye to the elders at Ephesus how he warned them ? He says, “ *For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of yourselves shall men arise speaking perverse things to*

*draw away disciples after them.*” ( Acts 20:29-30 ) My .... Satan has never destroyed the church with persecution. In fact the harder he hits the more the church seems to grow and prosper. *I mean where in this world is the church of Jesus Christ the strongest ?* Is it not in those lands where persecution is rife ? You see, persecution cleanses the church and strengthens the church. But is pressure from within not more dangerous ? *You see, while hostility was the theme of the first letter, heresy is the theme of the second letter.* The first letter deals with trials from without, ( 1 Pet 1:6-7 ) the second letter deals with enemies from within ( 2:1 ) The first letter was a letter of consolation, the second letter was a letter of warning. The first was all about encouragement for the church, the second was all about error in the church. The first letter deals with the subject of pain, but the second letter deals with the subject of poison. So I want you to see (1) (2)

### **(3) THE CONCLUSION OF THE BOOK**

What is Peter’s judgment as he writes this letter ? Just this. ***The primary solution to false teaching is knowledge of true doctrine.*** The word “*know or knowledge,*” is used at least thirteen times in this short letter. The word does not mean a mere intellectual understanding of some truth although that is included. It means a living participation in the truth in the sense that Christ used it in ( Jn 17:3 )

“*And this is life eternal that they may know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*” It’s an experiential knowledge of God based on the Scriptures. Is this not why the Word of God is so central in this book ? For the only weapon to fight false teaching and the devils

is the Word of God, which is why Peter emphasizes spiritual knowledge. Now there are three chapters in this little letter and three words sum up these three chapters. *The first chapter is all about Consolidation, the second about Condemnation, and the third about Consummation.*

### **1. CONSOLIDATION 1:1-21**

To consolidate is to make or become stronger. And is this not Peter’s desire for these believers ? The theme of the first letter is grace, the theme of the second letter is knowledge so Peter sums up both books by exhorting us to “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” ( 3:18 ) We need to have Bible truth in our heads ( knowledge ) and we need to show Bible truth in our lives ( grace ) we need to learn and to live the Word. Now this opening section is all about faith. Peter talks about,

#### ***(a) THE GIFT OF FAITH: 1:1-4***

And is faith not a gift ? Paul says “*For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God.*” ( Eph 2:8 ) You see, this faith,

#### **Identifies us with a Divine Person:**

Can you see ***His Deity*** ? “*God and our Saviour,*” are not two different persons rather both terms refer to the same person. You see, Peter is not just identifying Christ as Saviour but as God. ( Titus 2:10, 3:4 ) Can you see ***His Ability***: “*And our Saviour Jesus Christ.*” A Saviour is

one who brings salvation. When we put our faith in Him He gives us righteousness, grace and peace. Indeed we become “ *partakers of the divine nature.*” ( 1:4 ) That is, partakers in the very life that belongs to God. ( Col 3:3 1 Jn 5:11 )

Identifies us with a Divine Company:

For Peter called it “ *like precious faith.*” Or “ *to those who have a faith the same kind as ours.*” ( 1:1 ) It means that our standing with the Lord today is the same as that of the apostle’s centuries ago. They had no special advantage over us simply because they were privileged to walk with Christ. Christians today are tempted to think of the apostles as mighty men of superhuman faith. But God sees no distinction among Christians as Paul says “ *There is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither bond nor free there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*” ( Gal 3:28 )

Identifies us with Divine Resources:

**We have Divine Power:** whatever sufficiency we have is not because of any power we possess in ourselves but “ *according to the power that worketh in us.*” ( Eph 3:20 )  
**We have Divine Provision:** “ *all things that pertain unto life and godliness.*” ( 1:3 ) You see, when you are born into the family of God you are born complete. Now a lot of Christians do not believe that. They are always looking for something more, some new experience, some new truth, some further revelation, some elevating emotional high. Do you know folk like that ? They are seeking

“ *second blessings,*” “ *Spirit baptisms,*” tongues, mystical experiences, private revelations, the “ *deeper life,*” in an attempt to attain what is supposed to be missing from their lives. My .... do you know what Peter says ? “ *You don’t need any more experience or revelation. You already have everything you need to be able to serve, to please and to imitate the Lord.*” Isn’t this an amazing statement ? You see, if something is missing in your life it’s not because you need any more of Christ, it may be that Christ needs more of you.

**We have Divine Promises:** what are these “ *exceeding great and precious promises* ?” The glorious doctrinal facts presented in the Word of God. In other words, God has given us His Word to develop this life and godliness. Now this is all enshrined in the gift of faith.

***(b) THE GROWTH OF FAITH: 1:5-11***

Do you see what he says ? “ *And beside this ....,*” indicates there is something beyond the new birth there is growth. A wife became quite concerned over her husband’s declining health. His color was very pale and he had a terrible lack of energy for even the simplest of tasks. After much prodding she persuaded him to go to the doctor to find out what his problem might be. The doctor examined him carefully and ran tests to determine the exact nature of the man’s illness. After evaluating the test results, he called the woman into his office to give his prognosis. “ *Your husband is suffering from a rare form of anemia. Without proper treatment, he could be dead in a matter of just a few weeks,*” he informed the very

anxious wife. He went on to say, “ *However it can be successfully treated with the right care and diet. With the proper course of treatment, I am happy to report that you can expect full recovery.*” The wife was very relieved and asked what kind of action was necessary. The doctor gave his prescription, “ *You will need to get up every morning and fix a complete breakfast of pancakes, eggs, bacon, etc. Make sure that he has a home-cooked lunch each afternoon of fresh-baked bread and homemade soup. For dinner prepare a meal of fresh salad, old-fashioned meat and potatoes, fresh vegetables and perhaps homemade pie or cake for dessert. Because his immune system is so compromised, you will need to keep the house scrupulously clean. It will also be important to keep his stress level very low, so avoid any kind of confrontation or argument.*”

The wife emerged from the doctor’s office and with tears rolling down her cheeks, she faced her husband. The husband took one look at his wife and said very seriously, “ *The news is bad isn’t it ? What did the doctor say ?*” With a choked voice, the sobbing wife told her beloved husband, “ *The doctor says, you’re gonna die.*” Growth as a Christian shouldn’t be something we see as optional. It’s something we spend the rest of our life doing. It is kind of like riding a bicycle uphill. If you stop pedaling, you’re going to go backwards. My .... the Christian life is not a static experience.. We have to be growing. It’s not enough to be born into the family of God we need to grow spiritually, and this demands diligence and earnestness. *How where you at math’s at school ?* Well, this chapter has been called the math’s chapter.

There is *Multiplication*: “ *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.*” There is *Subtraction*: “ *he was purged from his old sins.*” ( 1:19 ) There is *Addition*: “ *Add to your faith ....,*” ( 1:5 ) Peter now lists seven qualities the believer is to expand and develop. ***Virtue***: it means “ *excellence.*” A Christian is supposed to glorify the Lord because he has God’s nature within and when he does this he shows “ *excellence.*” ***Knowledge***: is a reference to moral discernment, which of course comes from studying the Word. ***Temperance***: it means self-control. ( Pro 16:32 25:28 ) ***Patience***: is the ability to endure when life is difficult. ***Godliness***: means “ *God-likeness.*” A reverence and a fear of God and respect for His people.

***Brotherly kindness***: that must have be hard for Peter for the disciples like us often disagreed with one another.

***Charity***: a love for saints, sinners, the Scriptures and the Saviour. My .... do you see the result of all this ? “ *For if these things be in you ....,*” ( 1:8 ) Stunted growth means idleness: ( 1:8 ) fruitlessness ( 1:8 ) and blindness. ( 1:9 ) The late Ray Stedman told of asking a boy how old he was. Quick as a flash he said, “ *I’m twelve, going on thirteen, soon be fourteen.*” That boy was eager to grow up. Most of us want to grow in the Lord, especially when we are new in the faith. But often, as time goes on, the enthusiasm to grow begins to fade. We settle into a humdrum routine and grow spiritually complacent. Steve Cole tells about an old farmer who often described his Christian experience by saying, “ *Well, I’m not making much progress, but I’m established!*” One spring when he was hauling some logs, his wagon wheels sank down to the axles in mud. As he sat there viewing the dismal

situation, a neighbor who had always felt uncomfortable with the farmer's worn-out testimony came by. He called out, "*Brother Jones, I see you're not making much progress, but you must be content because you're well established.*" It was a way of pointing out, "*You're stuck.*" Tell me, is that you? Are you stuck? No growth, no development, no progress. Well, Peter says "*be diligent.*" Be sure you are saved. Ensure that you have the marks of a true believer. (a) (b)

### (c) **THE GROUND OF FAITH: 1:21-21**

I mean how can we be so sure that this message is the true Word of God? Peter answers that question by speaking about,

**A Sensational Wonder:** Do you see ( 1:15-17 )? What is Peter talking about? He is referring to his experience with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. This is experience is recorded by Matthew ( 17:1 ) Mark ( 9:2-8 ) and Luke ( 9:28-36 ) yet none of those men actually participated in it. But Peter did. Indeed the words that he uses in this passage remind us of his experience "*in the holy mount.*" Look at ( 1:13-14 ) where he uses the word "*tabernacle,*" on two occasions. Do you recall what he said on the mountain? "*Lord it is good for us to be here let us make three tabernacles one for thee and one for Moses and one for Elias.*" ( Matt 17:4 ) But what was the significance of the Transfiguration? Well, it was a picture of the coming kingdom, which these false teachers were denying. ( 3:4 ) You see, in all three gospels were the account of the Transfiguration is recorded it's introduced with a

statement about the kingdom. ( Lk 9:27 ) Do you see where ( 9:27 ) is? Just prior to the Transfiguration. Moreover the word "*kingdom,*" can be translated "*royal splendor.*" Do you see what Christ was promising? That before they died some of the disciples would see the kingdom of God in power? When did that happen? A few days, later on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the Lord Jesus revealed His glory.

The question had been raised "*what about God's promises to the Jews of a glorious kingdom on earth?*" Well, Peter is saying "*we have Christ's Transfiguration to assure us that the kingdom will come.*" For that glory that was revealed on the mount will be the glory that will be displayed at Christ's second coming. The false teachers denied the promise of His coming and substituted God's promises with "*cunningly devised fables,*" ( 1:16 ) that robbed the Christians of their blessed hope. But Peter says, "*I was there with Christ on the mount. I was an eye witness of His Majesty.*" Peter was there and he recorded his experience for us in this letter that he wrote inspired by the Spirit of God. But then experiences fade but the Word of God remains and so he passes from a sensational wonder to,

**A Sure Word:** for as helpful and reliable as Peter's experience was the prophetic word of Scripture is more sure. Peter says "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy.*" More sure than what? Than experience. Peter was saying in effect that although the Transfiguration was a wonderful experience, Scripture was a more trustworthy verification of his faith. Though he had seen no less than

the Lord in His glory, Peter was certain that the Word of God recorded by holy men moved by the Holy Spirit was a more solid foundation for what he believed. Can you see here,

### **The Importance of God's Word:**

“ *A more sure word of prophecy,*” is this not the problem with many today ? They want a “ *charismatic,*” experience, usually something extra-biblical. They want voices and visions, sounds and signs, revelations and rantings. Is this not the major flaw in the Charismatic movement ? It calls on experience rather than the Word of God to tell us what is true. But where does Peter turn us ? He takes us back to the Book. My .... here is the basis of our belief, here is the ground of our faith, the Bible, the Word of God. *Is this not where we need to turn when heresy, apostasy and error invade the church ?*

### **The Interpretation of God's Word:**

“ *Knowing this first that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*” ( 1:20 ) For a long time the Church of Rome used this text to support the idea that no-one could come privately or personally to the Bible to interpret it he had to have the interpretation of the church. But that's not what this means. The word “ *private,*” means “ *by itself,*” or “ *individually,*” it simply saying that no verse in the Bible should be interpreted in and of itself apart from the whole of God's divine revelation. In other words we do not interpret one Scripture in a way

that contradicts another Scripture. It is still true that a text taken out of context is a pretext.

### **The Inspiration of God's Word:**

The Bible did not come by the will of man rather Scripture comes from God. ( 1:21 ) The most important word here is “ *moved,*” which speaks of being carried along by the Holy Spirit, as a ship is carried by the wind. You see, these men wrote as the Spirit of God directed them to write and what they wrote was in a very real sense not their words, it was the very Word of God. Thank God our Bible is true. We can trust it because God gave it to us and its the ground of our faith. (1)

### **(2) CONDEMNATION 2:1-22**

For Peter, speaks of false teachers who bring in damnable or destructive heresies. The word “ *damnable,*” means “ *utter ruin,*” eternal condemnation for false teachers and their followers. Peter is saying “ *Beware of counterfeits.*” The nation of Israel was constantly being led astray by false prophets. Do you recall that Elijah ( 1 Kings 22:12 ) Isaiah ( Isa 9:15 28:7 ) and Jeremiah ( Jer 14:14 ) all of them had to contend with false prophets. Moreover, our Lord Jesus in His discourses gave warning of these things. Do you recall Christ's words ? “ *Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*” ( Matt 7:15 24:11 ) Peter touches here on,

### ***(a) The Doctrine of these False Teachers: 2:1-3***

The term heresies according to W.E. Vine denotes “ *an opinion especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted to the power of truth and leads to division and the formation of sects.*” These false teachers had exchanged the truth of God’s Word for their own self-styled opinions. Peter points out that they teach destructive heresies. Did you notice they Denied the Saviour: ( 2:1 ) they Decried the Scriptures ( 2:2 ) and they Derided the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus: ( 3:1-4 ) Do you know what Peter’s response to false teaching is ? A knowledge of the truth. He longs that we be “ *established in the present truth.*” ( 1:12 ) My .... the spirit of the age is doctrinal compromise. We are told that we must learn to worship, witness, and work together whether we be Protestant or Catholic, evangelical or liberal, charismatic or conservative but Peter’s position is entirely different, he says we have to fight for the faith.

#### ***(b) The Doom of these False Teachers: 2:4-9***

For false teachers will be ultimately condemned by God. Peter cites three Old Testament examples to prove it, the angels that sinned and are now imprisoned: ( 2:4 ) the flood: ( 2:5 ) and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. ( 2:6-9 ) My .... what a contrast between the false teachers and the authentic believers We are not looking for judgment but for the coming of the Lord to take us home to glory. ( 1 Thes 5:9 ) (a) (b)

#### ***(c) The Deeds of these False Teachers: 2:10-17***

Alan Cairns says “ *false prophets are always unscriptural in their doctrine and usually unclean in their lives.*” What a catalogue of sin is brought before us here. They were proud: ( 2:10-11 ) ignorant: ( 2:12 ) lustful: ( 2:13-14 ) and covetous: ( 2:15-16 ) They thought it didn’t matter how they lived for they supposed they had a ticket to heaven but surely people who make grace a covering for sin are strangers to grace. Can you see (a) (b) (c) ?

#### ***(d) The Deception of these False Teachers: 2:18-22***

For they promise liberty but lead folk into bondage. They are the blind leading the blind. ( Matt 15:14 ) They are as filthy pigs and dogs. *Some folk wonder is Peter teaching here that a Christian can lose his salvation ?* Not on your life. ( 1 Pet 1:3-5 ) You see, nowhere in the Bible does the Lord call a Christian a pig or a dog rather Peter compares us to sheep ( 1 Pet 2:25 ) These are false teachers going back to the life that suited their nature. ( 2:21-22 ) My .... Is this not the day we live in ? A day of false teachers. Warren Wiersbe says “ *You can detect them by their exaltation of self: their emphasis on making money: their great claims that they can change people: and their hidden lives of lust and sin.*” Peter says “ *Beware.*” ( 3:17 ) Watch what you are looking at on the God channel: on the internet, and on social media. “ ***Beware.***”

### **(3) CONSUMMATION 3:1-18**

For Peter directs our minds to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. He says in effect “ *Remember Christ is returning and He will set matters right.*” Of course the devil



continually places skeptics and false teachers within the church who reject, minimize or alter the promise of Christ's return.

***(a) The Lord's Return is Attacked: 3:1-4***

Now the doctrine that Peter is defending here is the return of Christ to the earth to set up His kingdom, and then, after, a 1000 years to usher in the new heavens and earth. Does the world scoff at the idea of the return of Christ ? ( Jude 18 ) Of course. The world says “ *God is not going to break into history and interrupt the progress of time.* ” But God is. Indeed here we see that,

***(b) The Lord's Return is Attested: 3:5-10***

God did intervene in history, there was the work of God in creation, ( 3:5 ) and there was the flood in Noah's day ( 3:6 ) God intervened in the past and He will intervene again. “ The Day of the Lord,” that period known as the Great Tribulation will come. It will come after the church has been raptured to heaven ( Rev 3:10 ) then judgment will follow. It's interesting that Peter speaks here of three worlds. Did you notice them ? “ *The world that then was,* ” ( 3:6 ) that is the **Past World**: “ *The heavens and the earth which are now,* ” ( 3:7 ) that is **the Present World**: “ *Nevertheless we .....* ” ( 3:13 ) that is **the Prospective World**. (a) (b)

***(c) The Lord's Return is Applied: 3:11-18***

In light of the Lord's future intervention in this world how should we live ? We need to be marked by godliness: ( 3:11 ) by holiness: ( 3:14 ) by awareness: ( 3:14 ) and by steadfastness. ( 3:17 ) My .... in light of His coming do you not want to finish well ?

At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, the last of the marathon runners were being carried off the field to first aid stations about an hour after the winner had crossed the finish line. Just a few spectators remained in the stands when they suddenly heard the sound of sirens and police whistles. All eyes turned to the gate to see John Stephen Akhwari, wearing the colors of Tanzania, limping into the stadium. His leg was bloodied and bandaged from a bad fall. He hobbled around the track past the finish line as the crowd rose and applauded as if he were the winner.

Someone later asked him why he had not quit, in view of his injury and the fact that he had no chance of winning a medal. He replied, “ *My country did not send me 7,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 7,000 miles to finish it.* ” Christ didn't give His life for you just to start the Christian life. He gave His life so that you would finish it and finish it well. You will do so if you guard yourself from spiritual error, grow in the grace and knowledge of Him, and live to glorify His name.