

## 2 Peter (1) - Writer and Recipients

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's turn briefly tonight to 2 Peter, chapter 1, verses 1 to 2. Simon 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 Saviour Jesus Christ, may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Now, it's probably fair to say that 2 Peter is one of the more neglected portions of Scripture, not necessarily in our reading of it, but perhaps in the preaching of the Gospel, and we can actually understand why that may be, although it's of course part of the Scripture.

It's not a surprise that it should be relatively neglected compared to some of the other books of the New Testament that we are much more regularly inclined to dip into or to study.

It's a short book, and the middle chapter is a very dark chapter, a dark chapter filled with God's judgment. And so it makes difficult reading, let alone exposition or acceptance or study by us.

And then the final chapter, of course, is dealing with the second coming of Christ, and indeed provides us with many interesting features and important features about that very important doctrine, the second coming, the return of our Lord.

[ 1 : 33 ] But we're going to do a bit of a study of 2 Peter for some time. It won't take us all that long, but there are so many interesting things in it.

And in fact, contrary to the size of the book, we'll find that there are many important teachings, both to do with our understanding of doctrine and salvation, but also of the kind of life or lifestyle that God requires of his people.

And we will find, too, that 2 Peter is as relevant for our particular needs in this generation, in our own setting, in this generation, in our nation, and in our island, indeed, in the society that we live amongst.

2 Peter and what it has to teach us is as relevant, as up-to-date, as important, as any other book of the Bible. Because Peter is actually setting out to counteract two things that are very closely connected.

And they'll come up again and again as you go through reading or studying 2 Peter. And the two things that he counteracts and sets out against in his teaching are, first of all, false teaching, and secondly, connected with that, immoral lifestyles.

[ 2 : 55 ] False teaching, immoral lifestyles are so frequently together in the way that God's word tells us how things come about.

And you don't need to go very far ourselves today to realize that false teaching or departure from the teaching of the Bible or setting aside some aspects of the Bible, if not all of it, inevitably leads to the wrong kind of behavior, to sinful behavior, to relationships that are themselves contrary to what God has specified in his word.

But we'll see that Peter's counteracting of this false teaching is something that he directs to them as a church, because this false teaching is not something that they're facing from outside.

It's not something that enemies of the gospel who don't belong to the church at all are setting out against them. The false teaching is coming from inside.

The false teaching is actually coming, as he says there in verse 1 of the next chapter, false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.

[ 4 : 08 ] And he goes on in that chapter to speak about those who are actually blots and blemishes in verse 13. They are blots and blemishes reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you.

In other words, they were in fellowship outwardly or in a practical sense with those that Peter is writing to as genuine, well-set believers in the Lord.

But these false teachers were all around them in the church. They were actually setting out their false teaching from inside. And that's what made it, as it always is, all the more dangerous. Now you can see how that relates immediately to the situation that you and I face today. Because there is so much false teaching that's passed on in the name of Christianity.

And in the name of being a Christian lifestyle. When we think about false teaching and its related lifestyle, then obviously that is something that today we're very much aware of.

[ 5 : 17 ] And it's not just in terms of things like same-sex marriage, same-sex relationships, that sort of lifestyle which we know is contrary to the teaching of Scripture and the plain teaching of Scripture.

And yet from within the church in the wider sense, you have so much that is being done to commend that, to push that increasingly as an acceptable way of looking at a Christian life and a Christian lifestyle.

Of course, inevitably, you have to get to that point by, first of all, either taking bits out of the Bible or else changing them about a little. Changing the meaning of it.

Or manipulating it in some way as to mean something than the traditional meaning. But that's the reality of it. And not only that, but you'll find other things that are immensely popular and immensely, not just immensely popular, but immensely enriching for those who write such books as these, where people are presented to us or they present themselves as having died.

There's just one example. I've just looked at something that came up today in some correspondence, that a young man who had co-authored a book a few years back, that he had factored and died.

[ 6 : 42 ] He was involved in a road accident. He claimed that he had died and that he had gone to heaven. And then that he had written this book when he came back from there. He came back to life.

He wrote this book along with someone else. And he tells of some of the things that he saw. And it's difficult for people not to be taken in by that.

Because people are looking for something out of the ordinary, and yet they don't really want that out of the ordinariness of the plain teaching of the Bible.

And when you actually realize that these books, and there have been quite a few of them over the last few years, that most of these books are in the multi-million copies, and therefore in the multi-million dollars or pounds of income, you realize how influential they are.

How many millions of people are reading these books? How many people are actually believing what they say? And especially if they're not well grounded in the teaching of the Bible already.

[ 7 : 46 ] Well, this young man has just come out and said, he's taking a particular Christian publishing house, who promoted his book, he's taking them to task.

Because he says, the things that he spoke of weren't true. And why didn't they actually look at these in the light of the Bible, he's saying?

When he wrote that book, he hadn't even read the Bible. He had never read the Bible before reading that, before writing that book. And yet millions of people have said, what an amazing story. What a spectacular thing. The Bible does speak about one man who died, and came back to life, because Jesus brought him back to life.

Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. It says nothing whatsoever about where Lazarus was, what he saw, what he heard, what he said after he was restored back to life by Jesus.

[ 8 : 51 ] And to say that Paul was in that position, that he was lifted up to heaven, and saw and heard wonderful things.

Yes, but he didn't write a book about it afterwards. And in fact, he hadn't died anyway. So it doesn't fit the picture of those people who have written those books. It doesn't fit that sort of category of people who have died, and then come back to life again.

Paul didn't die. And even though he does say in 2 Corinthians 12, that he was lifted up to heaven, and heard these wonderful things, he was forbidden to actually speak much about them, because they were unutterable.

He couldn't put them into words. I'm saying to the young people especially, be very careful about what you're reading. And these kind of novel types, accounts, of what really is so different, so appealing, so like what you'd like to believe.

They're not true if they contradict the teaching of the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible do you find that God uses such a means as somebody dying and then coming back to life to write a book about it. [10:06] And if you and I are not prepared to believe the Bible without it being proved to be correct by something other than the Bible, we're not treating our Bibles properly.

You don't need anything to prove the truth of the Bible before you believe it. You believe it for itself. And you remember what Jesus said when he gave that account of the rich man and Lazarus, not the Lazarus we've just mentioned that died and was taken back to life by Jesus, but Lazarus, the beggar who was laid at the gates of the rich man in Luke chapter 16.

They both died about the same time. The beggar went to heaven. The rich man went to hell. He went to his torments as it puts it there.

And he began as the account is there, remonstrating with Abraham whom he saw. If only somebody went back from the dead to visit his brothers who were still alive in the world, it would stop them going to this terrible place.

What did Jesus say? How did Jesus put it in Lazarus' in Abraham's response? They have Moses and the prophets.

[11:32] If they believe not Moses and the prophets, they will not believe though one rose from the dead. Now that's what Jesus really intends to present through that story to us.

You have your Bible. If you don't believe your Bible, it doesn't matter though somebody would come back and claim to be from the dead, you're not going to believe it if you don't believe this word that God has actually given us.

So, you see, there is what hell is saying. There is what false teaching really, false teaching is always damaging. But it's always even more damaging when it's presented in a very likable, readable, colorful, fresh, new imagery.

Always ask yourself about everything you read. How does that fit with the teaching of my Bible?

And if you're not sure, ask somebody you trust.

Ask somebody you know as an experienced Christian. Ask somebody that will actually lead you to what the Bible says about that. Stay with the Bible.

[12:46] You don't need any further proof than what you've got in the Bible. And that's the background, something of the background to 2 Peter. Just trying to bring it into a present day context and saying all of that by way of introduction.

But it's important that we use our Bibles for the present day. Some people read their Bibles and do it as if they were back in the Victorian age or back in the days of the Puritans or whatever.

You're reading your Bible, you're needing to use your Bible in the context in which God has placed you today. You take the teaching of that Bible, you apply it to the world in which you live in.

The circumstances in your life. The society that you have to actually stand out in as a Christian. And that's why 2 Peter is so relevant, so important, so up to date.

Here's teaching that you can take with you into your daily life in this society where you and I are set in this particular year of our lives.

[13:52] And we'll find by God's blessing that there's a lot here that we can apply and take with ourselves, take with us ourselves into our daily lives.

Well, here is the writer, first of all. Who is he? He's Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. There are some commentators that will say this is not very like the first epistle of Peter, so it's more likely that somebody wrote this and tried to give some authority to it by using the name of Peter.

There are some very cogent arguments in favor of that, but there are far more cogent arguments in favor of it being by the same author as wrote first Peter, by the apostle Peter.

And he's calling himself a servant of Jesus Christ and an apostle of Jesus Christ. And both of these words are important as he introduces himself. Why does he speak of himself this way?

Well, a servant of Jesus Christ immediately places himself on the same level as those he's writing to as far as what is required of him in his own lifestyle is concerned.

[15:05] He's immediately saying, I am a bond servant of Jesus Christ. In other words, before I write to you and say you have to live your life daily under the will of this Christ, you have to seek to be pleasing this Christ every step of your way as a Christian, this, he says, is where I am.

I am a servant of Jesus Christ. I am a bond servant of Jesus Christ. I have been bonded to the will of Christ so much so that I am actually committed to carrying out that will wherever it impacts my

life.

And you are a bond servant of Christ as a Christian. That is part of what it means to be a Christian. You are bonded to him. You are united to him in such a way that his will has taken over yours. It's not up to yourself how you live your life. It's not up to yourself what you find acceptable and what you don't find acceptable. It's not you that makes up the standard of your life or the standard for anybody else's life.

It's not you that determines what a marriage should be like or should not be like. It's not you that makes up your mind as to what is and is not really acceptable behavior nowadays for Christians. [16:23] It's already been made up. It's always been made up. It's the will of God. It's the will of Christ. It's the mind of our Savior. We are bonded to that.

We live under the authority of that. And it's always a will that's for our good. So where do you find the will of Christ? You're saying that's all very well but how do I know the will of Christ for every aspect of my life?

Where is it? Because he doesn't speak to me like God spoke to Abraham long ago and says Abraham here am I and then you have a conversation. Well he doesn't speak to you like that but he speaks to you no less certainly because he speaks to you in the same word.

That's where we're back to again. The importance of scripture. The importance of this word of God as his word. As his word for you and for me. and that's why heresy false teaching has always tended to to major upon the word of God itself upon the nature of scripture or the authority of scripture or this or that aspect of scripture because the devil knows and it's always the devil that's ultimately behind all sorts of heresies and false teachings and the devil knows full well when that his most successful strategy is to get you to doubt scripture not to doubt yourself not to doubt your minister or your elders but to doubt the word of God to doubt scripture or to doubt this or that aspect of scripture or to suggest to you well all of these great Christians and theologians and commentators and reformers down through history you know they could all be wrong and you could just well be right.

And that can sound very plausible when it's something that's stuck in your mind that you really want in yourself in the ways of your flesh or of your sinful heart to actually work through and find true.

[18:30] Always remember scripture dictates. Scripture is where you come to. So there's the first thing is a servant a bond servant of Jesus Christ.

Secondly he's an apostle. An apostle of Jesus Christ the same Jesus of which he is a servant. And of course that means an apostle means one sent he's the messenger of this Christ.

He is commissioned by this Christ to actually do such things as he's doing now in writing this epistle this letter. But there's one thing about speaking about himself as an apostle that doesn't arise when he speaks about himself as a servant.

What is it? What is it especially that's emphasized as he speaks about himself as an apostle? Well it's his authority. He hasn't just been sent by God and commissioned by God to speak for him. He has been given the authority that God gave him as an apostle. And that's why Paul speaks about his apostleship in the self same way.

[19:38] That's why for Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians for example it was so important to him that he demonstrated the validity of his apostleship which some people were attacking.

Because if you take away the apostleship from the apostle Paul then you're taking away the authority that God has given him to deal with things in a certain way. To speak authoritatively. To actually write these things in the name of God. God. And our generation society that you and I live in and ourselves as Christians in it.

Yes we need to be convinced of the Bible as inspired by God. As given by God. As we'll see in the end of the chapter shows that holy men of God they spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

We need to know that the Bible is indeed inspired of God. That it's a relevant book. That it's a book that as we're saying is in every way suitable.

[20:44] You can actually say as well the sufficiency of the Bible is important. That it contains everything that we need to know in our present circumstances.

circumstances. There's one thing that your heart and my heart and especially the society we live in we really need to get back to and get across to people.

That's the authority of the Bible. We're not at liberties. We're not at liberty to do a cut and paste job with the Bible.

We're not at liberty to take part of it and say that's now outdated. So we'll leave that to one side and we'll actually deal with the rest of it and we'll brush up some other aspects to bring it up into this particular century that we're living in.

It's either the word of God or it's not. And if it's the word of God then it remains that in every generation. And its authority is never less in any one generation than another.

[ 21 : 50 ] And we really need to keep in mind the authority of scripture. The authority that these apostles spoke about as God gave them the authority as apostles to do what they did and to write what they wrote.

And that authority comes across to us as God's own authority from scripture. So that's so important. That's the writer.

He's a servant. He's an apostle. But who's he writing to? Well he describes them. Notice interestingly how he describes them. To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing or the AV has a like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now chapter 3 the beginning there speaks about another letter that this writer has written. This is now the second letter that I'm writing to you beloved.

And if we take it that that's a reference to 1st Peter what we have as 1st Peter then it would mean that this letter is written pretty much to the same people as I described at the beginning of the first letter to all of those Christians to those believers who are scattered in all of these areas that he refers to.

[ 23 : 13 ] And that's something that happened after a period of intense persecution under one of the Roman emperors had caused a lot of scattering of Christians to different parts of the empire.

And that's obvious from his 1st epistle because he talks so much there about persecution. About what these Christians are suffering and having to undergo for Christ. And the whole burden of the 1st epistle is directed to these circumstances.

Now even if he's writing to the same ones it doesn't mean they're no longer under persecution or under that sort of difficulty. But it does mean they're now facing something else as well.

They're facing this false teaching. They've got an added problem. They've got something else they need to contend with. And that's why he says to them here I'm writing to you who have obtained a like precious faith or a faith of equal standing.

Now verses 1 and 2 before we go on into the detail of it you can actually say that in many ways they are a summary of everything else he's going to write.

[ 24 : 26 ] And that's not surprising because the Bible sometimes does that. It really gives us the package in a brief kind of way and then it proceeds to unpack that or unfold that in more detail.

and what Peter is doing is very important to ourselves as well because in summing it up in these two verses you can say he's really getting them to focus in these circumstances on two things that they must always keep coming back to.

And the two things are what they believe and the need to know what they believe. That's the first thing.

that they must know what they believe in. They must know the gospel. They must know the faith as he goes on to speak about it. So that's the first thing.

That they must know what they believe. And secondly that they must grow under that. Knowing what they believe underneath that underneath all that that contains for them they must grow as Christians.

[ 25 : 32 ] and so it is for ourselves. Indeed that's how he finishes isn't it? It's very near the end of the epistle. He talks about growing in you therefore beloved.

He says the last verse in fact is grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and evermore. So that's how he finishes.

That's really in summary here what he's saying. Know what you believe. Always come back to the great things that God has given you to believe in. The things that are foundational to your life. The great doctrines of the faith.

The things on which you stand spiritually. The things the devil has always wanted to get at. To change your opinion of. And make sure as well he's saying that as you're doing that at the same time you're growing as a Christian.

That you're not stagnant. That you're not going backwards. That you're committed to growth. Growth in your knowledge. Growth in your way of life. Growth in your relationship with other Christians.

[ 26 : 41 ] Growth in your understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Why it's important to live as a Christian in your society. And all of that is there in summary really in these two verses.

Like precious faith he says with ours. By that means with us apostles. You have obtained a faith of equal standing. In other words there are two things in that really that stand out.

First of all the faith itself is not our exercising of faith our believing. It's rather the whole body of doctrine on which our Christianity our Christian life is founded.

In other words you really find when it's spoken of like this the next epistle the one of sorry the one the epistle of Jude that is closely connected actually with 2 Peter.

You remember there that Jude is saying I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation but I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

[ 27 : 49 ] and that means things like God as three persons God as your father Jesus Christ the son the work of the Holy Spirit things like being born again being justified being sanctified all of these great doctrines that are so crucial to our salvation but the faith also takes in and the way the reformers looked at it especially they never left out our lifestyle out of it because holiness of life belongs to the faith for one thing it belongs to the faith so much as we've seen in the essentials that without it no one shall see the Lord and because of that it is itself something that belongs within the definition of the faith of this body of teaching of what you might say makes up the core of the gospel and he's saying to them you have obtained from God you have come to receive that from God this faith this body of teaching this gospel these things that you believe in these things that are crucial to you and what he's saying is it's a like precious faith with ours you're not second class citizens you're not on a different level with the apostles as far as this is concerned yes the apostles were special in a category of authority that

God gave to them as a particular set of people at the foundation of the New Testament church but here is an apostle saying your faith the faith you've received the things that belong to the gospel as you have them in your possession you have them just as much as we have you have every right to them as much as we have they're not less in your possession than they are in the possession of the apostles they have the same standing as Christians as the apostles had in Christ the apostles were not any more saved they were not any more important in the eyes of God as far as who to save and who were not to be saved and who he loved and who he didn't love there is an equality throughout as far as our standing in Christ is concerned whatever other differences there are you he says have obtained a like faith a faith of equal standing with ours or a like precious faith the word precious is included in the meaning of the word as well and that's why he has it there well of course that's one of the things that we face isn't it what I mean is we face in our situation the kind of argument that says look we're living in changed days even going back 20 30 40 50 years never mind going further back to days when there were other theologians that are still eminent in people's minds but we're living in changed days people will say and people from inside the church will say and people who say that they are

Christians and Christian theologians will say but we're living in changed days so you've got to change some things about the message you've got to change some elements of the message you've got to change these things just to suit what people actually need in the present day well the need has not changed your needs today and the needs of that world out there are the same as the needs that were current in the days of the apostle himself human sinful fallen hearts that need Christ that's it and the Christ that needs to be presented to them is the one found in the gospel the same gospel that Peter preached that Peter commended to these Christians who had obtained a like precious faith with himself he's nowhere suggesting that to counteract the false teaching you've got to adjust the message of the gospel somehow we're not talking about things like methods of delivery or ways of presenting the truth we're talking about the truth itself the message itself the gospel itself and that's what's crucial for

Peter here as he writes these words you have obtained a like precious faith same equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ now I'm going to leave it there we haven't got time really even to finish the first passage there as a greeting and definition passage before he leads into the detail but let's just recap on what we've seen tonight we've looked at the

context and how that makes it so appropriate to our own age our own society our own place in it our own life as Christians we've looked at the writer and how he describes himself and why he describes himself like that servant of Christ bonded to the will of Christ we've looked at him as an apostle of Christ one having authority and how that carries over into the authority the Bible has for us as the will of Christ is made known to us in it and how important it is to have that sense of the authority of the word really always permeating through to our souls and we've seen that the faith that we've been given this great body of gospel teaching and of the gospel itself of the faith that God has delivered to the saints as Jude has it he's once for all given it to the saints it's there as a great deposit of truth and now Peter is saying it's exactly the same as we received and we're not going to change it even however much the circumstances of people in our lives may change it's a like precious faith to ourselves and it's good to finish on that word precious let's not lose sight of that but this is all about something very precious something you'd give your life to defend something you would never give away something you wouldn't want to give any part of away the faith the gospel the things of our salvation which

[ 35 : 04 ] God has kindly given us so so precious and so potent both to have to hold to promote to commend to keep to guard precious let's pray lord help us we pray as we come to realize the preciousness of what you have deposited with us when we have your truth in our possession when we have these great elements of your truth that comprise the faith that is so precious to us all lord help us to be faithful to it help us we pray to carry it forth in our lives to show it in the way that we live help us to live each day under your authority gladly enable us to show lord that we are pleased to have you as our lord as the one whose own mind and authority dictates as to how we are to live and so we pray your blessing on this portion of your word to us this evening enrich our lives through it we pray and help us to be committed to the enriching of other lives also as we would seek to witness for you hear us now we pray and part us with your blessing for

Jesus sake Amen