

The Tough Love of 2 Peter
 2 Peter 1:1-2
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 Ames, Iowa
 Sept. 27, 2020

In 2 Peter, the Apostle Peter is giving us tough love. True knowledge of God is always at stake in every generation. We need to be given tough love, so we will hold fast to God's word in a world that is desperately trying to rip the word of God and true knowledge of God from the church.

If you remember, 1 Peter warned us of persecution and the danger that comes from outside the body of Christ. However, 2 Peter warns us of danger that comes from inside the body of Christ. In other words, false teachers, false doctrine, and false gospels.

2 Peter warns to be on guard for danger from within our own family. That sounds like a harsh thing to say, but the fact is we must be diligent in our doctrine and our knowledge of God. There have been many well-meaning people who begin sound in their doctrine and then later in life simply go off the rails.

Think about it this way. Think about it like your own biological family. I love my family members, as I am sure you do. However, in my family, there are members who Stacy and I call pot-stirrers. Pot-stirrers are family members who are always telling some half-truth or false story in order to create friction in the family.

Pot stirrers can lay waste to a biological family or a church family. They are like F-5 tornadoes or Cat 5 hurricanes. You have received the warning, and you see the storm coming, so you must prepare for the storm. 2 Peter is the alarm to take shelter by diligently growing in the true knowledge of God in His word and true doctrine so you will be equipped to withstand the storm.

Here is one more way to think about 2 Peter. 2 Peter is Psalm 1 of the NT, but it is not poetry. We might say 2 Peter is Psalm 1 unpacked.

Psalm 1 teaches us that there are only two ways to live. We may live in the way of the righteous or the way of the scoffer. There is no middle ground. Listen to Psalm 1:1-2:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night.

Likewise, the Apostle Peter, in 2 Peter 1:1, tells us that Jesus has given His people His righteousness and that we should grow in our knowledge of God. Later, in 2 Peter 3:3, he says, "knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires." Then Peter closes the letter by calling us not to walk in the path of the scoffer or be carried away by the error of lawless people. Instead, he calls us to be diligent to be found in Christ without spot or blemish and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This morning we will work through vv. 1-2. Verses 1-2 are the introduction of 2 Peter. In these two verses, we will examine the writer, the readers, and the purpose.

I. The Writer (v. 1a)

The writer of 2 Peter is the Apostle Peter. Peter introduces himself differently in this letter than he did in 1 Peter. He calls himself Simeon Peter. This was the dual name often used for the Peter in the Gospels. Here it is spelled in the Hebrew spelling of Simeon. Simon is the transliteration of Simeon.

The Hebrew name Simeon is the shortened name of Samuel, which means "God has heard". As we learned in 1 Peter, Peter is the Greek for rock or little stone.

Here is what I want you to notice, when we hear Peter call himself Simon Peter, we are getting a picture of the whole man. It was not uncommon for Jewish people to go by their first and middle names. It is one of those cultural practices.

It is not uncommon for people down south to go by their first and middle names. We were in Texas last week, and my dad called me Michael Ray all week long. When I am called by both names, it takes me back to when I was younger. I think of myself a bit differently. I remember when I was young.

When we hear Peter refer to himself as Simon Peter, we are reminded of the Simon Peter, who struggled as a disciple. We are reminded of his life before he met Jesus, and his life after he met Jesus.

Do you ever do that? Do you ever reflect on your life before you met Jesus? It is good to remember your life before you met Jesus. When you think about your life before Christ, hopefully, you can marvel at how much God has transformed your life into the image of Jesus.

When our elders conduct membership interviews, one of the questions we ask is what was your life like before you met Jesus. We want to know what your life was like before you met Christ. We want to know how you met Jesus? We also want to know how Jesus has transformed your life since you came to faith in Him.

When you meet Jesus, it should be evident to you and others that you have repented of your sin and trust in Christ. There should be evidence that you are growing in grace and knowledge of God.

Next, in v. 1, Peter identifies himself as: “servant and apostle to Jesus Christ.” The order of these two titles is important. Peter has come a long way in his faith. He has learned humility from the Ultimate Servant, King Jesus.

If you remember in 1 Peter 5:1, he identified himself as a “fellow elder.” Like the Apostle Paul, Peter does not seek to lord his apostleship over his fellow believers. He knows that they have “obtained a faith of equal standing with” his. Peter sees himself as a slave or deacon of Jesus Christ and, therefore, to the church. He has learned humility. He has learned to put others first.

Yet, Peter is still an apostle. Peter was one who was sent to the churches with God’s word. The word apostle means one who is sent as a messenger to preach. But first-century apostles were given divine inspiration to produce special revelation for the establishment of the church.

We have people who are sent today, but they do not have the same authority as the Apostles did. Preachers today do not give special revelation. Preachers like Pastor Eric and me are called to preach, and we are sent out to preach. Missionaries are sent out to preach, teach, and evangelize the nations, but they do not produce new revelation or special revelation from God. That kind of authority to speak new revelation on behalf of God died out with the Apostles.

Here is what we need to know: Jesus’ followers are still sent out. We are not sent out with new revelation. Instead, we are sent to proclaim what Jesus has already done. We are gospel-ambassadors of Christ sent out to proclaim that the Kingdom has come in Jesus Christ. We call all sinners to repent of their sin and trust Jesus Christ as their only hope of salvation. We call sinners to flee to Jesus before He returns to take His church home. We warn them that to reject Jesus is to remain under the wrath of God and that by their rejection of Jesus, they will spend eternity in Hell.

My question is: are you fulfilling your calling? Are you telling others about how Jesus has changed your life? Are you telling others about what Jesus accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection?

Many of us are working at home now, and so we are not around unbelievers as much as we used to be. Right now, we not only have stay-at-home moms but stay-at-home dads who work from home. Your first priority is those precious children God has given you. This is your first mission field. After that, you go to the ends of your street and then to the ends of the earth.

In October, our small groups are going to study the 3 Circles. Three Circles is a study to training us in conversational evangelism. Let me encourage you to participate in your small group and learn the 3 Circles conversational plan for sharing the gospel.

II. The Readers (v. 1b)

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now we learn to whom Peter was writing. He was writing to the churches he previously wrote to in Asia Minor and all believers. His letter is for us. This is why 2 Peter is referred to as a General Epistle. It is for all churches of all ages. This is not to say that other letters were not for all churches of all ages but that they were written to specific churches with specific issues. Those letters are for all churches of all ages as well.

Look at what Peter says in the last part of v. 1. This is an amazing sentence, “To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours.”

For people who lived in a cast-cultural system, this had to be a mind-blowing statement. To be told by an apostle that their faith in Jesus was as equal to his was remarkable. These people needed to understand that the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

You see, your status in the Kingdom of God is not based on who you are, what you do, or what you have accomplished. Your status in God’s Kingdom is not connected to your job, profession, your social standing, your bank account, or your education. It is simply based on faith in Jesus.

The bank teller and the bank president are equal before God. The farmer and ag engineer are equal before God. The student and the teacher or professor are equal before God. The mechanic and the mechanical engineer are equal before God. The carpenter and the architect are equal before God. The prisoner and the warden are equal before God. You may have different roles or jobs in life, but because of your faith in Christ, you are equal with an apostle.

Jesus had to remind His disciples after being given authority to cast out demons and heal the sick that the great joy in life is not authority, power, prestige, but the fact that they were saved. We should never forget that the greatest joy in life is to be saved. It is simple faith in Jesus.

The Greek word “obtained” means their faith is a faith that was divinely given by God. You see, if you were able to manufacture your faith, then you might be able to claim that your faith made you better than someone else. You might think you can claim that you have more faith than someone else. However, when you realize that faith is a divine gift of God, it means we are all equal before God, and we are all dependent on God.

Look at the next phrase, “by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” This statement teaches us two important truths.

The first truth is that faith is the instrument by which we receive the righteousness of Jesus. It is a righteousness earned by Jesus and given to us by the faith given to us by our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The second truth is teaching us that Jesus is God. Peter zeros in on the divinity of Jesus and His nature as God.

Make no mistake; Jesus is God. He is the second person of the Trinity who stepped out of Heaven as truly God and truly man. He kept the law of God perfectly, thus fulfilling the covenant of God and earn the righteousness we desperately needed. Then He died a sinner’s death on the cross, thus paying the penalty for our sins against our Holy God. Then He rose from the dead, thus defeating death, and now by our faith in Him we have abundant righteousness, we are loved by God, we have been adopted into the family of God, and we have an eternal home in Heaven.

Peter has made it clear that the only way to be made right with God is by Christ’s righteousness. Righteousness must be given to you by God through the faith that is given to you in Jesus.

When you are given faith, it is your faith, so the question is: have you placed your faith in Jesus? Do not leave here today without trusting in the righteousness of Christ. Talk to a member of Grand or one of our elders. Seek, and you shall find, knock, and the door of salvation shall be opened unto you. Anyone can seek. Anyone can knock. Anyone can ask for Jesus to save him.

III. The Purpose (v. 2)

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Finally, we see Peter’s purpose for writing his letter. Verse 2 is a greeting and a blessing, but it is also his purpose.

The words “grace and peace” are standard greetings, but they are not throw-off words. We tend to use throw-off phrases for greetings to simply get the conversation started but not Peter. God’s word does not use fillers to simply take up space on a page.

Grace and peace are spiritual gifts given to God’s people. They are not empty words for Christians. They are the heart of the Christian life.

Grace is God’s undeserved blessing given to sinners. It is short-hand for the gospel or the work of the gospel. Grace points us to what God has done to save His people from their sins through the work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. So, no, grace is not a mere greeting. Grace is the reason we are hearing this message this morning.

The greeting of peace must be understood in light of the Old Testament. Peace is not simply the cessation of hostilities. In the Old Testament, peace means wholeness or completeness. It carries the idea of shalom. This peace begins with peace between God and man and culminates with God giving full restoration of all things at the end of time.

Once again, we must keep the cross before us because the grace and peace found in Peter’s greeting are only achieved by the death of the Son of God on the cross. As the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:13-17:

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

However, Peter is not content with a simple helping of grace and peace. He says he wants it to be multiplied to every believer. He wants them to know that it is by grace through faith they have been saved, and now they have peace with God.

Then in the last part of v. 2, he tells us the means of grace by which we will see this grace and peace multiplied to us.

Now the purpose of his letter is clear. Peter begins and ends this letter by calling us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, just in case we did not get his point at the beginning of the letter, he ends the letter by saying, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Brothers and sisters, the grace and peace of Christ, are multiplied to us when we grow in our knowledge of God and His word. We grow in grace and peace when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to read and study God's word. We are going to hear Peter charge us with this kind of grace-driven effort to grow in our faith. We grow when we participate in small groups, participate in corporate worship, disciple others, and be disciplined by someone is how we practice our multiplication of grace and peace. The longer and deeper we grow in the word of God, the more grace and peace we will experience in life.

Let's all pray for one another this week to strive to see the grace and peace of God multiplied in our church. May the grace and peace of Jesus be exponentially multiplied to us. May we be a church that puts forth a grace-driven effort to see the grace and peace of God multiplied to us through prayer and study of God's word among God's people.

In 2 Peter, we have a letter inspired by the Holy Spirit written by the hand of a man who remembered what his life was like before grace and peace had been multiplied to him. He remembered what it was like to be Simon, a fisherman and a stumbling disciple of Christ.

Years later, in life, Peter understands the impact of the multiplication of interest of grace and peace. When Peter wrote this letter, he was concerned for people who were not investing in the true knowledge of God. They were in danger of being made spiritually bankrupt by false teachers.

Brothers and sisters, let's be followers of Christ who invest in the multiplication of grace and peace of Jesus through the true knowledge of the word of God so that we acquire true knowledge of God.