

The Second Epistle of **PETER**¹

[To fellow believers]

1:1 Simon Peter, slave² and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained³ with us the same kind of faith in the righteousness⁴ of our God and Savior,⁵ Jesus Christ: 2 may grace and peace be multiplied to you⁶ through a real knowledge of God⁷ and of our Lord Jesus,⁸ 3 in that His divine power has granted to us all things *pertaining* to life and godliness, through the real knowledge of the One⁹ who called us by glory and excellence,¹⁰ 4 through which¹¹ He has granted to us such precious and extraordinary promises, so that through these¹² you may become partakers of a divine nature,¹³ having escaped the depravity that is in the world because of lust.¹⁴

[Take the Truth seriously!]
[Our 'entrance' depends on us]

1:5 So for this very reason, making every effort,¹⁵ to your faith add excellence,¹⁶ and to the excellence knowledge, 6 and to the knowledge self-control, and to the self-control perseverance, and to the perseverance godliness, 7 and to the godliness brotherly affection, and to the brotherly affection love.¹⁷ 8 Because with these things existing and increasing in you, it makes *you to be* neither useless nor unfruitful in the real knowledge¹⁸ of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is blind, being so myopic, having forgotten the cleansing from his past sins.¹⁹

¹ Both the translation and the notes are the responsibility of Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD, ©, being based on his edition of the Greek New Testament, according to the only significant line of transmission, both ancient and independent, that has a demonstrable archetypal form in all 27 books. The Greek Text of which this is a translation, and articles explaining the preference, may be downloaded free from www.walkinthiscommandments.com.

² That's right, slave—Jude (vs. 1), James (1:1) and Paul (Romans 1:1) also call themselves slaves of Jesus Christ.

³ The verb here suggests receiving something by lot or appointment; in this case the source would be God's will: this faith is something God apportioned to them.

⁴ That's right, faith in Christ's righteousness: 1) that Jesus was righteous, not dying for any wrongdoing of His own; 2) that being intrinsically righteous He can impart His righteousness to us.

⁵ "God and Savior" refer to a single person, the Son.

⁶ 'Multiplied'—not just a little, lots. In his first letter Peter ended the salutation here, but now he fleshes out the means.

⁷ As our genuine knowledge of God grows, so the amount or degree of grace and peace we receive also grows.

⁸ Here the reference is to two persons, Father and Son—however, the grammar could be taken to indicate a single person, in which case I would render 'of God, even our Lord Jesus' (or 'Jesus our Lord').

⁹ Again, we only appropriate the complete provision for 'life and godliness' to the degree that we grow in our genuine knowledge of God. As Creator He made everything upon which life depends, including life itself, but our understanding of and appreciation for His provision is measured by our relationship with Him.

¹⁰ I take it that Peter is saying that it is the glory and moral excellence of Christ that attracts us, but there is the extraordinary promise that we can share in those qualities, as he spells out in verse 4.

¹¹ 'Which' is plural and presumably refers back to 'glory and excellence'.

¹² The promises—but of course we have to appropriate them.

¹³ There is no definite article with 'divine nature'; 'become' indicates a process—the more like Christ we become, the more divine will our nature be.

¹⁴ At times Peter's syntax seems to be almost as convoluted as Paul's; the first four verses form a single sentence. The precise interrelationship of the dependent clauses is not transparent. The notes above give my understanding of Peter's intent. It is the inordinate desire (lust) for anything in this world that leads to depravity. The proper amount of food, drink, pleasure, money, power or whatever is a good thing. It's when people want more that they get into trouble.

¹⁵ Here Peter emphasizes human responsibility, heavily.

¹⁶ The word used here can refer to excellence in any area, but in this context the emphasis is presumably on moral excellence.

¹⁷ Do these qualities have to be added in this sequence, or can we tackle them in any order, or even all at once? If this sequence must be followed I don't understand how it works. I believe spiritual growth moves in an upward spiral; the Holy Spirit makes the rounds of all areas, progressively increasing the level of excellence, or Christ-likeness. I take this to be the point of the 'increasing' in verse 8.

¹⁸ I have used 'real knowledge' repeatedly because I take that to be the intent of the Text. Real knowledge of God contrasts with human ideas about God and false 'knowledge' furnished by demonic prophecies, visions, etc. It also contrasts with true theoretical knowledge about God—real knowledge must be experiential, as well as being true. Notice that we are supposed to be useful, to be fruitful. If we don't grow something is definitely wrong, as verse 9 makes clear.

¹⁹ Peter says that someone who lacks the qualities listed in verses 5-7 has forgotten his cleansing and become myopic to the point of being practically blind. If we don't walk with God, don't study His Word, don't listen to the Holy Spirit, Satan will cheerfully take care of the rest.

10 Therefore, brothers, you should be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure,¹ for if you do these things you will never stumble.² 11 Because in this way you will be granted the abundant entrance³ into the unending kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.⁴

[Peter's death is imminent]

12 So then, I will not neglect to keep reminding you about these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it right to stir you up by a reminder, as long as I am in this 'tent', 14 knowing that the shedding of my 'tent' is imminent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.⁵ 15 Moreover I will take pains to provide a reminder of these things for you to have,⁶ as needed, after my exit.

[The prophetic Word is trustworthy]

16 Now then, we did not follow craftily devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; rather we were attentive eyewitnesses of His majesty 17—because He received from God the Father honor and glory when that **Voice**⁷ was directed to Him by the Magnificent Glory, "This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am *always* well pleased"—18 yes, we heard this Voice being uttered from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.⁸

19 And so we have the most reliable prophetic Word, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,⁹ until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;¹⁰ 20 knowing this first, that no Prophecy of Scripture comes to be from private release;¹¹ 21 for no Prophecy ever came by the will of man, rather holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.¹²

[Watch out for false teachers!]

[Their teachings are destructive]

2:1 However, there were also false prophets among the people, just as, indeed, there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce¹³ destructive heresies, even denying the Owner who bought them (bringing on themselves swift destruction).¹⁴ 2 And many will follow their licentious ways, because of which the way of the Truth will be defamed.¹⁵ 3 And in covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; since way back the judgment for such people is not slack, and their destruction will not sleep.

[Their doom is sure]

¹ As in his first letter, Peter emphasizes both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, only this verse is especially bothersome to certain theological systems. If we can make our election sure, then we can also make it unsure, or words have no meaning. Since both truths are clearly presented from cover to cover of the Bible, theological systems that emphasize only one of the two do not do justice to the Sacred Text. To emphasize only one is to hop on one foot—to walk, run and work efficiently you really need both feet. To our limited human logic the two truths appear to be incompatible, but to God's infinite logic they obviously are not. Those who are wise will bow to God's logic.

² The verb used is 'to stumble', not 'to fall', but the tense used suggests a permanent consequence.

³ The Text has the definite article; I take the point to be that there will be different levels or kinds of 'entrance'; some will have many rewards, others some, others none (1 Corinthians 3:15). Those who follow the orientation in these verses will receive many rewards, they will get 'the abundant entrance'. (I suppose we will all agree that it is better to get in by the skin of your teeth [1 Corinthians 3:15] than not to get in at all, but wouldn't it be better yet to have some rewards? The amount is up to us.)

⁴ To participate in that 'unending Kingdom' is surely worth whatever effort is required of us.

⁵ The Lord told Peter his time was up, and evidently did the same for Paul (2 Timothy 4:6). "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). A servant of God dies only at the appointed time.

⁶ If he did indeed write more than the two letters, we have no copy of the added material. (Maybe he died before he could.)

⁷ Peter never forgot that VOICE; he even coined the phrase, Magnificent Glory, to describe the source. Evidently what happened on that mountain was totally overwhelming. What happened there turned an ordinary mountain into a 'holy' one.

⁸ Verses 16-18 have to do with the transfiguration experience: those present had a foretaste of 'the power and coming' of the Lord; they experienced a microcosm of the Millennial Kingdom.

⁹ In this dark world we need the light of God's Word, but when all prophecies are fulfilled and we are glorified, when we are basking in the light of the Lamb (Revelation 21:23), the prophetic Word we now know will belong to ancient history.

¹⁰ An interesting figure of speech—I imagine that 'the day dawning' and 'the morning star rising' are basically synonymous, since the morning star heralds the new day. But the new day happens in our hearts; eternal life is a quality of life that we can start enjoying right now, in this world. However, Peter's use of 'until' points to the future Glorious Day.

¹¹ The word rendered 'release' occurs only here in the New Testament, but the basic meaning of the root is 'to loose' or 'release'. With reference to a prophetic word it could refer either to its enunciation/origination or to its interpretation. Verse 21 makes clear that here it is the origination. False or fake prophecies derive from the will of the 'prophet' (or demonic influence), but true prophecy never does.

¹² Here we have an impressive description of the process of Inspiration.

¹³ The verb here does not normally imply secrecy; purveyors of false ideas usually come on as sincere, above board, confident, even bold.

¹⁴ Sometimes we wish that destruction were a little 'swifter', but 3:9 gives the answer.

¹⁵ The biblical worldview is defamed.

4 Because if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but delivered them into chains of darkness, confining them in Tartarus¹ to be reserved for judgment, 5 and did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood on the world of the ungodly, 6 and condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction, reducing them to ashes (providing a warning to those who are intent on being ungodly), 7 while He rescued upright Lot, who was distressed by the licentious lifestyle of the wicked 8 (for that upright man,² dwelling among them, tormented an upright soul from day to day by seeing and hearing lawless deeds) 9—*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment³ for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who go after the flesh in the lust for defilement,⁴ and despise authority.

[Their depravity is 'unreal']

They are audacious, self-willed; they are not afraid to revile majestic beings,⁵ 11 whereas angels, though being greater in might and power,⁶ do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.⁷ 12 But these, as unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct made to be caught and destroyed, spouting off in matters of which they are ignorant, will be destroyed by their own depravity,⁸ 13 receiving the wages of unrighteousness. Counting it a pleasure to carouse in the daytime, they are stains and blemishes, reveling in their own deceptions⁹ while they feast with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin,¹⁰ enticing unstable souls; having a heart trained in greediness they are children of a curse;¹¹ 15 having forsaken the right way¹² they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he got a rebuke for his wrongdoing—a mute donkey speaking with a human voice restrained the insanity of the prophet. 17 These are waterless springs, clouds driven by a storm,¹³ for whom the blackest of the darkness¹⁴ has been reserved forever.

[Their victims lose out]

18 Because speaking pompous words of emptiness they entice through fleshly lusts, through licentiousness, those who have actually escaped from those who are living in error, 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. 20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the real knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome,

¹ Tartarus is not to be equated with Hades (the holding area for departed human spirits) nor with the Lake of Fire, since the Text here clearly says those angels are being reserved for judgment. The day when Satan and his angels will be cast into the Lake is still future (Revelation 20:10, Matthew 25:41). So Tartarus is a prison for certain fallen angels—for more about these angels see 1 Peter 3:19-20 and Jude 6-7.

² Compared to the people around him Lot was definitely 'upright', but evidently it was mostly a passive uprightness; he didn't make any converts.

³ They are under punishment already before the Day of judgment. Compare Luke 16:19-31, which is not said to be a parable: in Hades (which is not the Lake of Fire), before the final judgment, the rich man was already being punished (when someone is put in prison he is already being punished, before his case is tried and sentence pronounced). In Hades there is a great gulf between the just and the unjust. Since we determine our destination by what we do in this life, and there is no second chance (the rich man knew he was condemned), the punishment, or the blessing, starts at physical death.

⁴ People who are greedy in their moral depravity tend not to respect (or even acknowledge) authority, including that of angelic beings.

⁵ Literally 'glories'—based on verse 11 it appears that they are high ranking fallen angels.

⁶ Than unregenerate human beings (presumably not than those seated in Christ—Ephesians 1:20-21, 2:6).

⁷ Compare Jude 9.

⁸ Depravity destroys the quality of life already, down here, even before death and judgment.

⁹ 'Reveling in their own deceptions'—I imagine all of us know people like this.

¹⁰ The eyes don't stop sinning. I am reminded of our Lord's words in Matthew 6:22-23. "The lamp of the body is the eye. So if your eye is sound your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has 'eye' in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real 'eye')—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it. 'Evil' here has the idea of malignant, aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to everything he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. Compare Titus 1:15.

¹¹ Peter, a Jew, uses a Jewish idiom—they are characterized by curse. They are a walking curse, damaging everyone they touch.

¹² Their first decision was to forsake the right—once you turn out the light you condemn yourself to stumble around in the dark.

¹³ Such clouds often rush past without dropping any water. The false teachers make all sorts of promises, but being empty they can't deliver; they cheat their hearers.

¹⁴ This darkness is associated with Satan's kingdom. Peter is saying that they will share Satan's destiny. The description given to these false teachers is unusually severe, Peter really doesn't like them! Since God hates those who have sold themselves to do evil (Psalm 5:5-6, Deuteronomy 7:10), so does Peter, and so must we. (Psalm 97:10 has a command: "You who love Jehovah, hate evil!" David, at least, obeyed it—Psalm 26:5, 31:6, 119:113, 139:21-22. How about us?) God's love includes hating evil, of necessity, because of the consequences of the evil. If God loves us He must be against whatever may harm us.

the latter circumstances have become worse for them than the first ones. 21 For it would have been better¹ for them not to have really known the way of the righteousness, than having really known it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: a dog returns to its own vomit and a bathed sow to wallowing in mud.

[So take the Truth seriously!!]

3:1 Dear ones, this is now a second letter I am writing to you (in both of which I stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder), 2 so that you remember the words that were spoken before by the holy prophets and the command of the Lord and Savior, through your apostles.²

[Mockers will come]

3 Knowing this first: in the last days mockers will come, living according to their own lusts 4 and saying: “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 This because they deliberately forget that heavens³ and land (out of water and through water)⁴ had been existing from of old by the word of God, 6 by which *word* the world⁵ that then was perished, being flooded by water.⁶

[This world will be destroyed]

7 But the current heavens, and the earth, are being reserved by His word for fire,⁷ being preserved until the day of judgment and perdition of godless men.⁸

[The Lord is longsuffering]

8 But dear ones, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.⁹ 9 The Lord is not delaying the promise, as some consider delay, but rather is patient toward us, not wishing anyone to perish but all to come into repentance.¹⁰

[Hasten the Day of God]

10 However, the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night, in which heavens¹¹ will pass away with a whoosh, while the elements will be dissolved by burning—both the earth and the works in it will be completely consumed. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed, what kind of people

¹ Oh my, batten down the hatches! If it would have been **better** for them not to have known, then of necessity they are now worse off than they were before they knew (as verse 20 makes clear). But before they knew they were lost, so what can be worse than that? To be lost without a chance. Before, they were lost but had the option to be saved. But once they know the Truth, if they throw it away there is no second chance. Hebrews 6:4-6 is plain enough (if you hear someone twist the Text into a pretzel in an effort to avoid the plain meaning, you may be sure that whatever position he is trying to defend is incorrect). “For it is impossible for those who were once for all [*hapax*] enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become sharers in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the coming age, and have fallen away—it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, thereby crucifying the Son of God **again**, just for themselves, holding Him up to contempt.” You can’t crucify **again** unless you have crucified at least once already. For someone to crucify Jesus **again** must mean that he has indeed taken advantage of the first crucifixion, he was indeed saved—if he was never really saved he never really appropriated the first crucifixion, so he can’t do it **again**.

I have used ‘to really know’ to translate the heightened form *epiginwskw* (in contrast to *ginwskw*, ‘to know’) and ‘real knowledge’ to translate the heightened form *epignwsw* (in contrast to *gnwsw*, ‘knowledge’). I consider that the Holy Spirit is an intelligent and honest user of human language, so His choice of the heightened forms was deliberate. Those who seek to arrive at the intended meaning of the Text need to respect that deliberate choice. When Peter says someone has a ‘real knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’, that someone must be saved.

To elevate a doctrinal system above the Word of God is a form of idolatry.

² Peter places the ‘command of the Lord and Savior through your apostles’ (which I take to be a reference to N.T. writings) on a par with the ‘words spoken before by the holy prophets’, which evidently refers to O.T. writings.

³ There is no definite article with ‘heavens’, I suppose because the third heaven, God’s abode, is not included—the reference here would be to the first heaven (the atmosphere) and the second (stellar space).

⁴ To be visible and useable (for normal purposes) land must rise above the water level, ‘out of water’, but to sustain life there must be water available on the land as well, ‘through/by water’.

⁵ ‘World’ is different from ‘land’ (vs. 5) and refers to the organized world—Noah’s flood didn’t destroy the planet earth, just the organized surface. It was the divine decree that unleashed the destructive forces.

⁶ All around the world there are layers of sedimentary material hundreds of meters deep, and the layerings are similar. The whole globe was scoured and the surface rearranged about 4350 years ago. To ignore the evidence is a deliberate choice, and has serious consequences.

⁷ God promised Noah that He would never destroy the world by water again, investing the rainbow as a symbol of that promise (there were no rainbows before the Flood)—the next time it will be by fire. The destruction in Noah’s day involved the earth and the first heaven, the atmosphere; the next destruction will include the second heaven, stellar space, as well.

⁸ ‘Preserved’—our planet was created for the use of the human race and placed under human administration, so it cannot be destroyed until human history has run its course.

⁹ Although I myself have been partial to the idea that this information constitutes a precise formula, it is doubtless more prudent to take this as a general statement, showing that an eternal Being does not regard time the way we do.

¹⁰ If everything were ‘cut and dried’, there would be no point in waiting.

¹¹ The same comment applies as in verse 5.

ought you to be in holy living and godliness, 12 expecting and hastening¹ the coming of the day of God, because of which heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?
[A better world is coming]

13 Nevertheless, we look for new heavens and a new earth² in which dwells righteousness, according to His promise.

[So be serious!]

14 Therefore, dear ones, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace,³ faultless and blameless; 15 and consider the longsuffering of our Lord to be salvation⁴—just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, 16 as also in all his epistles⁵ (speaking in them of these things, about which there are some things hard to understand), which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures,⁶ to their own destruction.⁷ 17 You therefore, dear ones, being forewarned, be on guard lest, being carried away by the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness.⁸ 18 Rather, may you grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and into the eternal day.⁹ Amen.

¹ 'Hastening' is a transitive verb. If we can hasten the coming, we can also delay it, or words don't mean anything. The point is, what we do or don't do makes a difference, which is why there will be an accounting. I imagine that there are outside limits or parameters that God's sovereignty will guarantee, but within those parameters it's up to us (like players on a football field—the score is up to them). So how can we hasten the coming of God's day? By living our lives to the hilt on behalf of His Kingdom, standing up for biblical values in the society at large, working to get the Gospel to the last ethnic nation.

² God is not through creating, but since the Son will have His bride, the next time around righteousness will be guaranteed.

³ When we face the Creator are we going to see a smile, or a frown—it's up to us.

⁴ Peter repeats the truth stated in verse 9 above—just because God isn't striking us down like He did with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) doesn't mean that we're getting a free ride. If you have sense you look ahead.

⁵ Peter was obviously aware of a 'Pauline corpus'—the use of 'all' suggests that Peter was aware of a fair number of Paul's letters.

⁶ Peter affirms that Paul's letters are Scripture!

⁷ The verb form of this noun is usually rendered 'to perish'—the implication is that such people are lost. To distort what is in a newspaper or magazine does not have the same consequence—it is distorting God's Word that is serious.

⁸ Peter emphasizes human responsibility, again.

⁹ Peter doesn't use the usual 'forever', but the effect is the same.