

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (2 Pet 3:18)

Author, Date and Place of Writing

Peter identifies himself as the author of this, his second letter (1:1; 3:1). (For more detail on Peter see the introduction to 1 Peter.) Peter wrote this letter just prior to his martyrdom (1:13-15), sometime between A.D. 65-67. It is most likely that he wrote this letter from Rome, as he did his first letter (1 Pe 5:13).

Recipients

While Peter wrote his first letter to the scattered believers in specific places, this second letter is written more generally to the faithful (1:2; 3:1). (For more on the recipients, see the introduction to 1 Peter.)

Background

As the gospel spread among the Gentiles, initially they had to overcome Jewish legalism, which Apostle Paul fought against. However, as the gospel permeated more deeply into the cultures of Gentile nations, licentiousness was revealed to be a greater challenge to gospel truth for them. Their lifestyle was deeply imbued with idolatry and sexual immorality (2:13-14). In order to justify their lifestyle, false teachers compromised the gospel truth to accommodate their culture. In doing so, they denied the sovereignty and grace of Jesus (2:1). They claimed that Christian freedom permitted them to follow the corrupt desires of the flesh (2:10,19). They scoffed at Jesus’ second coming in order to follow their own evil desires (3:3).

Purpose of Writing

Peter proclaims in this letter that the truth of the gospel is unchanging and that godly life is essential for believers in any culture in any time period of history. Accordingly, he stimulates believers to wholesome thinking (3:1). He wanted them to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through the apostles (3:2). He wanted them to know who Jesus is: our God and Savior (1:1), our Christ and Lord (1:1,2). He assured them that God has given us everything we need for a godly life (1:3-4; 3:11,14). He urged them to make every effort to make their calling and election sure so that they

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may not stumble, but receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1:10-11). Peter reminded them of the gospel, of which he was an eyewitness (1:12-18), and affirmed the prophetic message of Scripture (1:19-21).

Peter devotes chapter 2 to exposing false teachers who secretly introduced destructive heresies (2:1), and described them in detail. They denied the sovereign Lord (2:1), exploited the believers in their greed (2:3), followed the corrupt desires of the flesh—ignoring God’s judgment, boldly and arrogantly despised all authority (2:4-11), and advocated licentiousness (2:13-14,19). Appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they enticed those who were just escaping from those who live in error (2:18). To help believers overcome the poisonous influence of false teachers, Peter reminds them of basic truths of the faith, especially that the Day of the Lord would come. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promises, believers look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (3:12-13). Finally, Peter exhorted them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (3:18).

Characteristics

Savior Jesus Christ/Lord Jesus Christ. Peter repeatedly refers to Jesus in terms that emphasize his deity: “God and Savior Jesus Christ” (1:1), “Jesus our Lord” (1:2), “His divine power” (1:3), “our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8,14,16), “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (1:11; 2:20; 3:18), and “our Lord and Savior” (3:2). In this way Peter refutes false teachings about the person of Jesus and affirms that he is the sovereign Lord.

Godly, godliness/ungodly. When we believe the gospel, it transforms us into godly people. A godly lifestyle is essential for Christians. Peter emphasizes the importance of a godly lifestyle for Christians, even in the midst of an ungodly atmosphere. So he repeats the words “godly,” “godliness,” and “ungodly” (1:3,6,7; 2:5,6,9; 3:7,11).

Make every effort. Peter urges believers to “make every effort” to add to their faith Christian virtues (1:5 ff.), to confirm their calling and election (1:10), and to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Jesus (3:14). For this reason, Peter himself would “make every effort” to remind them of the gospel (1:15). False teaching was attractive to the sinful nature for it appealed to easygoing tendency; those who don’t make every effort can just follow their sinful desires and cultural

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trends. But the true teaching of the gospel challenges this desire and culture, and urges us to live a godly life.

Grace and knowledge. Peter used the words “grace and knowledge” together uniquely in this letter. From the beginning, he mentioned “Grace...through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (1:2). He ends his letter by saying, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18a). He also refers to “knowledge” in relation to spiritual growth and escaping the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (1:4,5,6,8; 2:20-21). True knowledge of God and Jesus Christ is essential in overcoming false teachings. This enables believers to avoid the error of the lawless (3:17).

View of Scripture. Peter declares that the gospel is not a cleverly invented story, but the fulfillment of prophecy in Scripture. Prophecy did not originate in the human will, but prophets spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (1:19-21). Peter includes as Scripture the command given by our Lord and Savior Jesus through the apostles, including the eyewitness testimony of Peter himself and the writings of Paul (1:16,18; 3:2; 3:16). Peter commends these to us as completely reliable and urges us to pay attention to them until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts (1:19).

The Day of the Lord. Peter warned that in the last days scoffers would come, saying, “Where is this coming he promised? Ever since our ancestors died everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (3:3-4). They denied that Jesus would come again and judge the ungodly (3:7). They should know that God delays judgment because he is patient, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance (3:9). Peter proclaimed clearly, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief” (3:10), referring to the Second Coming of Jesus. The phrase, “the day of the Lord,” is a repeated reference from the Old Testament and emphasizes the judgment of ungodly people. On the day of the Lord, “the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare” (3:10). Knowing this helps us to live holy and godly lives (3:11).

Main Theme

The grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is everything God’s people need to live godly lives. His divine power enables us to participate in the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption of the world caused by evil desires. Then we can live effective and productive lives, and we will never

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stumble, or fall into the error of the lawless which leads to destruction. Rather, we will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is not static, but it is the source of life and power to grow in godliness.

Purpose of our Study

In our times people tend to distort the gospel to accommodate corrupted culture. They deny Jesus' deity and God's judgment, and scoff at Jesus' Second Coming. They promote an ungodly lifestyle as legitimate for Christians in the name of freedom and tolerance. Their teachings—which appeal to the lustful desires of the flesh—are attractive, especially to young believers. But in the end, they and their followers will all go to destruction. How can we escape this terrible destiny? We want to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior and participate in his divine nature. We want to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we may receive a rich welcome into his kingdom.

Outline

- I. Sender, recipients and greetings (1:1-2)
- II. Confirm your calling and election (1:3-11)
 - A. Divine power for life and godliness; participate in the divine nature (3-4)
 - B. Make every effort to add to your faith (5-7)
 - C. Spiritual qualities that keep us from being ineffective, unproductive (8-9)
 - D. Make every effort to confirm your calling and election (10-11)
- III. Testimonies about our Lord Jesus Christ (12-21)
 - A. Always remember these things (12-15)
 - B. We were eyewitnesses of his majesty (16-18)
 - C. We have the prophetic message in Scripture (19-21)
- IV. False teachers and their destiny (2:1-22)
 - A. False teachers introduce destructive heresies (1-3)
 - B. God rescues the godly and judges the unrighteous (4-10a)
 - i. God did not spare angels (4)
 - ii. God did not spare the ancient world (5)
 - iii. God did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah (6)
 - iv. God spared Lot, a righteous man (7-8)
 - v. God rescues the godly and punishes the unrighteous (9-10a)

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- C. The character of false teachers (10b-22)
 - i. They boldly heap abuse on celestial beings (10b-11)
 - ii. They are like unreasoning animals and will be destroyed (12-13a)
 - iii. They pursue pleasure (13b-14a)
 - iv. They are well trained in greed like Balaam (14b-16)
 - v. Their incorrigible, hypocritical behavior (17-19)
 - vi. They return to corruption like a dog to its vomit (20-22)
- V. The Day of the Lord will come (3:1-18)
 - A. Peter wrote to remind them of God's words (1-2)
 - B. Peter warns that scoffers will come (3-5)
 - C. By God's word judgment come (6-7)
 - D. God's patience in judgment (8-9)
 - E. The heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire (10)
 - F. You ought to live holy and godly lives (11-15)
 - G. Be on guard and grow in grace and knowledge (16-18)