

Grow in Jesus

2 Peter 1:1-2

Turn in your Bibles to the book of 2 Peter. Tonight, I have the privilege of kicking off a new series. I love Peter's second letter. I've told several of you, but when I'm between book studies and I'm feeling indecisive, you will likely find me paging over to Peter's writings, specifically 2 Peter. It's all about grace and peace being multiplied in our lives as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (3:18). One of my favorite verses in all of Scripture is 2 Peter 1:3 (that Tim has the pleasure of teaching next week). It says...

2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

He's given us everything we need! The Father sent His Son to save us because we couldn't get to Him on our own, and the Son (who is also the Word) sent the Spirit to empower us to live this life according to His will because we couldn't do it on our own.

Peter's words are words of ASSURANCE. They flow right into GROWING YOUR FAITH and HOW TO KNOW you're growing in your faith. If anyone had anything to say about GROWING, wouldn't you say it was Peter? I mean, when you look at who he was during the earthly ministry of Jesus and compare that guy with the one who wrote these letters, it's clear! HE GOT IT! To me, Peter is the "apostle of hope" because, if God can do that in the life of Peter, then there's HOPE FOR ME! Given the way Peter struggled with his temper, along with his rashness (which characterized several of the disciples, and probably several of us), his struggle to accept the hard aspects of God's will, his fearful denial of Jesus the night of His arrest, and the tearful, humbling confrontation and restoration on the shores of the Galilee, you know PETER WAS MOTIVATED TO GROW! Have you ever been so motivated? Ever been in that place where you knew you had acted rashly, denied Him once again with your sinfulness, and felt so loathsome and unworthy of God's love? Peter had been there and sought to never go there again. He would've been motivated to GROW and to KNOW HE WAS GROWING.

From there his letter flows into KNOWING THAT THE BIBLE IS TRUE. The end of chapter one is a brilliant apologetic for the veracity of the Word of God, the anchor to your walk with Him. And why would Peter emphasize this? To protect you from false teachers, the subject of chapter two. 2 Peter is a "pull-you-in-close-and-look-after-you letter." It's Peter's swan song. He wrote...

2 Peter 1:13-14

13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

He wanted to make sure that these believers kept growing in Jesus, even after he was gone. Peter LOVED those to whom he wrote, and I FEEL THAT LOVE EVERY TIME I READ IT, the love of a gruff old fisherman who's heart had been radically changed by Jesus into a heart of a shepherd ready to lay down his life for the sheep himself. That's probably why I keep being drawn back to this letter.

Finally, Peter's got something special for us at the end. To Paul were given the majority of the MYSTERIES of Scripture. John was given several, as well continue to see on Sundays through our study of the Revelation. However, Peter was given ONE, and Peter unveils it for us that we may know how we are to live in light of THAT DAY (3:11-13).

Why the series summary, Matthew? "Stay in your lane!" I know Dale, Tim, and I will thoroughly handle these other passages, but I'M INTRODUCING THE BOOK TONIGHT, and I can't help myself. I love this letter, and I want you to love this letter, and I don't want you to miss the encouragement and edification to be had from it, so I give you a preview of the rest, so you'll make sure to be here for it. Tonight, though, we're just going to enjoy the first two verses. If you've found your place, we'll pick up in verse one...

2 Peter 1:1-2

1 Simeon 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 Savior Jesus Christ:

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

The authorship of 2 Peter has been challenged more than any other New Testament writing. We know that if some random person wrote something that they wanted to be widely disseminated, they would attribute their work to someone more well-known, and in this this sphere of life in this time, Peter definitely fit the bill. However, Peter has left us significant clues within the text that assure us that he is, in fact, the one who wrote this letter, and we're going to start off examining that evidence as we talk about the background information of the letter.

The first thing that catches our eye is this "Simeon Peter" character in the by-line. Before you start wondering about, "Simeon," NO, this is not the knockoff version. It isn't "Great Value Peter." This is the same guy who dictated the gospel account of Mark and penned the first letter, the real deal Peter. He only named himself by "Peter" in this first letter, but in his second, he also called himself "Simeon," the Hebraic version of "Simon," which is Aramaic. Some scholars view this odd identification as a strike against Petrine authorship, but many feel that Peter's self-identification as "Simeon" rather than "Simon" is strong evidence that this is the Apostle Peter because a forger almost certainly would have used the common spelling of the name.

From there, we move on to the second WHO, that being the intended audience of the letter. On first inspection, there doesn't seem to be a specific group addressed by this letter, but then we read in chapter three that this is the second letter the author had written to this group (2 Peter 3:1). This is

another piece of internal, biographical evidence that lines up with Peter's life, further supporting the claim that the Peter who wrote 1 Peter also wrote 2 Peter. When we look back at 1 Peter we read...

1 Peter 1:1

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

The "**Dispersion**," or *diaspora* was a reference to Jews living outside the land of Israel due to the multiple exiles experienced by the nation. Though many returned to the Land upon being given permission to do so, we know that many more remained in the lands of the empires that conquered them. They could've been some of the Jews who came to faith under the preaching of Peter and the rest of the Apostles at Pentecost (the reason the Apostles spoke in several different languages), and who were subsequently scattered throughout Asia Minor due to the great persecution that arose following the martyrdom of Stephen. This audience also would have included Jews and Gentiles who had come to faith through the Paul's missionary travels, and now Peter was encouraging them during their exile as they looked forward to their heavenly home.

The unique name of the author and his reference to a letter he had already written both point to Peter as the author, and so does the timeframe in which the letter was written. 2 Peter was written around 67-68 AD shortly before Peter's death, and the author makes mention of his imminent departure in 2 Peter 1:14. Between these pieces of internal evidence that are consistent with Peter's life (including a personal account of witnessing the transfiguration) and the external support of Peter's authorship in the form of acceptance by early church fathers such as Origen, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Ignatius, and Clement of Rome, I'm convinced of the letter's authenticity.

Now, you may wonder, "WHY DO YOU GET CAUGHT UP ON ALL THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THIS LETTER?" I do because it's a sidewind attack on the Word. To allow a claim to stand that detracts from the inspired authority of any part of Scripture is to open yourself up to questioning and ultimately dismissing ALL of Scripture. You must decide where you stand, and I'm just giving you information to help you arrive at a conclusion. With that out of the way, though, let's dive a bit deeper into the application of the letter. In verse one, we read...

2 Peter 1:1

Simeon 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 Savior Jesus Christ:

As we've already seen, Peter greets us a tad differently in his second epistle. Whereas he introduced himself in his first letter simply as Peter, the name Jesus gave him that means "rock," this time around, he also includes his birth name, "Simeon," the Hebrew version of "Simon" (Aramaic). Simeon means "harkening," and we get that from the historic birth of the apostle's possible namesake in Genesis...

Genesis 29:33

She [Leah] conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon.

The name Simeon sounds like the Hebrew word *heard*. You'll recall from the end of our lengthy Genesis series that Jacob had a couple of sons who were hotheads. They massacred every man in a village because one man in it, the son of the ruler, violated their sister Dinah. Jacob had done nothing about it, so the boys took matters into their own hands. Those sons were SIMEON and Levi. Later on, Jacob would prophesy of these two saying...

Genesis 49:5-7

**5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers;
weapons of violence are their swords.
6 Let my soul come not into their council;
O my glory, be not joined to their company.
For in their anger they killed men,
and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen.
7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
and their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob
and scatter them in Israel."**

Jacob may as well have been talking about the Simeon who would walk with Jesus almost 2,000 years later. This Simeon would be so impetuous as to rebuke the Lord for saying that He must die at the hands of the elders and the chief priests (Matthew 16:22). When warned of their imminent persecution, this Simeon would tell Jesus, "*I'll never deny You! No, I'll DIE first!*" (Luke 22:33), only to deny Him three times later. When soldiers came to arrest Jesus just as He had foretold, this Simeon would take up his own sword and attack the servant of the high priest (John 18:10).

Simeon certainly lived up to his name. His parents likely described him as "a handful." Jesus would've agreed, but you know what? I think that's part of why He chose Simeon. Aimed in the right direction, his brashness would translate to boldness, to the point of actually WALKING ON WATER and ultimately becoming the spokesman for the Apostles! Fully given over to the Savior, reckless Simeon would become rock-solid Peter, and there's a big part of me that believes that this was Simeon Peter's purpose in greeting his readers by this name. Again, this is one of the reasons I love Peter's letters; they're an ode to God's grace that CHANGES LIVES.

In his last letter, Peter greeted us with the authority of an Apostle, one who was hand-selected by Jesus to lead in the Church, essentially a universal elder, with the power to even perform miracles. This is who our God and Savior Jesus Christ had made him. However, as Peter greets us this time around, he doesn't emphasize his apostleship as he did in his first letter. This time, he greets us as a *doulos*, a servant, or better translated, a *bondservant*.

As I taught a couple of Sundays ago, slavery was common in ancient times. While some became slaves from being conquered, slavery was largely an economical arrangement, as was the case in Israel. If a man couldn't pay his debt, or he couldn't support himself, he would sell himself into slavery to his fellow Israelite. This is representative of how we belong to God. Paul said...

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

We're not our own; we've been bought. Just like Peter, we claim, "*Jesus paid my debt!*" However, the *doulos* was a slave who willingly chose to REMAIN under the authority of his master even when he was granted his freedom because he had another claim. The Law tells us...

Exodus 21:5-6

5 But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' 6 then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

"I love my Master." To KNOW Jesus is to LOVE Him. To LOVE Jesus is to SERVE Him. This is the refrain of the bondservant in light of all that Christ has done for him. The hymnist Isaac Watts said it well...

*When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.*

*See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

And then our response that Christ's sacrifice so reasonably evokes...

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.*

My mentor, Dr. Whipple, would often end a message saying, *"It's time for us to fall in love with Jesus all over again."* I love my Master. I'll gladly be His slave forever. I hope this is your plea tonight as well.

It certainly was Peter's plea. He said, *"I'm a SERVANT,"* and this humble identifier flowed right into the encouraging way that he addressed his audience. Though he was aware of his unique relationship with Jesus and the apostolic authority that came with it, Peter knew he was writing to others who were redeemed by the very same God, and he immediately built them up and established a rapport with them as he told them that they had **"a faith of equal standing with ours."** The NET Bible beautifully translates the phrase, **"a faith JUST AS PRECIOUS AS OURS."**

Truly, Peter WAS somebody. He had walked with Jesus, on water, no less! He had learned the hard lessons. He had walked through the fire. However, in his eyes, he was nobody. *"I'm a SERVANT."* His Gentile readers would identify with this. *"Even though I DIDN'T KNOW GOD LIKE THE JEWS, my faith is precious! Even though I DIDN'T WALK WITH THE MESSIAH in His earthly ministry like Peter, my faith is just as precious!"*

Consider the shamefully adulterous and pagan lifestyles from which many of these believers, especially the Gentile believers, had been saved. Peter knew a thing or two about shame, didn't he? *"I'll NEVER abandon You, Lord! No, I'll DIE first!"* Then, when questioned moments later... *"Never met the guy."* Again and AGAIN Peter denied the Lord, until the Lord looked over at him and the rooster crowed. Peter knew BROKENNESS and SHAME. Three times Peter denied knowing Jesus, and three times Jesus asked him, **"Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"** OH, THE SHAME! But then he was restored! Peter knew GREAT SHAME AND GREAT FORGIVENESS, so he could meaningfully say, **"YOUR FAITH IS JUST AS PRECIOUS AS OURS,"** to people he knew felt inferior. *"You may have been saved from a life you're ashamed of,"* Peter could say. *"It doesn't matter. YOUR FAITH IS PRECIOUS!"*

Peter drives home the point that the salvation obtained by these Gentiles through faith is in no way inferior to that of the Jews. It wasn't obtained by any perceived personal merit but by **"the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."** Pastor Dale used a nifty illustration on Sunday to depict how Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, or our "account," if you will. Our spiritual account was in the RED because of our sin. We inherited the sins of our first parents, Adam and Eve—akin to inheriting debt—plus we actively plunged ourselves further into debt as we rebelled against the Lord. However, because of Christ's death on the cross, His burial, and His subsequent resurrection, He not only WIPED OUT our sin debt (Colossians 2:14), but He also put us INFINITELY IN THE BLACK with regards to righteousness because He deposited His perfect righteousness into our accounts. As Pastor Dale illustrated on Sunday as he inserted a slip of paper with our name on it into a large envelope with Jesus' Name on it, those of us who have called upon Jesus by faith to save us are IN HIM. When the Father looks upon us, He only sees Christ's blood, and knows that our debt has already been PAID IN FULL.

Now, before we move on to the final application of the night, I'm compelled to emphasize Peter's description of Jesus. He calls Him **"our GOD AND SAVIOR Jesus Christ."** JESUS IS GOD. Peter already

encouraged his readers with his first letter to always be ready to give an *apologia*, a REASONED RESPONSE, for the hope we have in Christ, and contained in this simple phrase, “**our God and Savior Jesus Christ,**” is one of the strongest, clearest, most inescapable affirmations of the deity of Christ in all the New Testament. Allow me to explain...

Some scholars separate "**God and Savior Jesus Christ,**" claiming that they refer to two different Persons; however, the terms "**God and Savior**" refer to the same person, Jesus Christ. The construction in Greek is known as the Granville Sharp rule...



...named after this gentleman, the English philanthropist-linguist who first clearly articulated the rule in 1798. Sharp stated that when the construction of the grammar in the Greek includes...

definite article
+ singular common noun
+ copulative conjunction
+ singular common noun
= the same person

...a definite article, a singular common noun, connected by a copulative (or additive) conjunction (a conjunction that joins other words in order to relate additional information) to another singular noun, THE REFERENT IS ALWAYS THE SAME PERSON. So, for example, in the Greek, Peter wrote...

τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
art. God our and Savior Jesus Christ

So, you see *τοῦ*. That's the definite article (not translated into English). Next to that is the singular common noun *θεοῦ*, which is *God*, then the conjunction, *καὶ*, which is *and*, and the other singular common noun, *σωτῆρος*, which is *Savior*. Peter's matter-of-fact claim in this passage is that Jesus Christ

is GOD and Savior. You'll find several other examples of this construction here in Peter's letter and throughout the New Testament, examples like...

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

In this instance, the Father is in view. **"God and Father"** are talking about the same Person. Examples like these lend credence to Sharp's point. Now, the question that people sometimes raise in argument against this rule is whether terms such as **"God"** and **"Savior"** can be considered common nouns as opposed to proper names. In response to these critiques, Sharp and others have demonstrated that a proper name in the Greeks is one that cannot be pluralized. You are able to pluralize "god" to "gods" and "savior" to "saviors," so this construction and others like it in the Greek fit Sharp's rule. After more than 200 years' worth of attempts to invalidate Granville Sharp rule, it stands unbroken and vindicated. If you're being obedient to the Great Commission, you're going to encounter people who claim, *"The Bible doesn't teach that Jesus is God."* However, 2 Peter 1:1 as well as multiple passage in Titus just like it all clearly and unequivocally declare that Jesus is God, and knowing Him is the key to being lavished with grace and peace. Peter says...

2 Peter 1:2

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

Peter ended his FIRST letter to these scattered, persecuted believers with the encouragement that, after they had suffered for a little while, they would be restored, confirmed, strengthened and established by **"the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10)**. Our God and Savior Jesus Christ is the God of all grace, and through His atonement on the cross, the floodgates of grace were opened to us. I've shown you this definition before, but it's powerful and bears repeating. Strong's Concordance defines grace (Gk. *charis*) in this context as...

"...the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues"

This is the grace that we receive by faith at salvation and EXPERIENCE by faith as we walk in obedience with the Lord. It's God's grace that EMPOWERS us to live the life of faithful obedience to which He's called us. The life of the believer runs on grace, and that isn't license to indulge in sin, but POWER to live above sin and go even further to perform Spirit-controlled acts of service to God. Nobody understood this better than the Apostle Paul. As he wrote to the Corinthians about his unworthiness to be an Apostle, he reconciled his apostolic calling and his unworthiness of it, saying...

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

It was God's grace working in Him, and that grace works in us as we grow in Jesus! As a result of receiving God's grace at the moment of salvation and through daily obedience, the believer also experiences PEACE WITH GOD! This peace has been described as "the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ...fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is" (Strong's). Do you know what Peter is saying as he tells us about this grace and peace? GOD'S GOT YOU. Have you ever been told that in the midst of a difficult season? "*God's got you.*" If you have, I'm telling you, it can be overwhelming. "*God's got you.*" It's a reviving breath. "*God's got you.*" It's a balm for a worn and weary soul. "*God's got you.*" Remember the persecution that Peter's audience was suffering. Peter gave them the key to enduring it. **"May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."** No matter what comes your way, God's got grace to get you through it, and in that intimate relationship there's peace.

We remind ourselves that God's got us as we GROW IN JESUS, as we grow **"in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."** That's the key to the entire book, the key to spiritual maturity, to becoming well-founded on the Word, to withstanding false teaching, and living in light of the coming Day of the Lord. It's all about our knowledge of God, and this isn't mere intellect or general knowledge, *gnōsis* in the Greek. No, the word Peter uses to describe this knowledge of God is *epignōsis*, which means the PRECISE or CORRECT or FULL knowledge. The Apostle John said in his first letter that our love for God is perfected (completed) as we obey His Word (1 John 2:5). It's more than mere sentiment, it's LOVE IN ACTION. In the same way, I would argue that FULLNESS of knowledge is knowledge that you ACT UPON. Paul said as much as he prayed for the Colossians. He said...

Colossians 1:9-10

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

The knowledge of God is meant to change us, and it does as we walk in it. This knowledge has been revealed through the inspired Word of God, and as we rely upon the Holy Spirit to teach us and obey the Word by faith, Peter asserts that grace and peace from God are LAVISHED upon us.

"Simeon Peter." The name tells the whole story, the story of a rash fisherman turned rock-solid bondservant through faith in **"our God and Savior Jesus Christ."** You know, one day, every one of us who have called upon Jesus to save us is going to get a new name. Perhaps in eternity I'll be known as Matthew (something), a name that will bring God glory just by saying it because it will be the name of a man whose life was changed by the grace and the knowledge of God. That's my heart's cry, and I believe it's yours too. Therefore, I know of no better way to wrap up our time here tonight than to simply speak Peter's prayer over you...

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