

Established in Truth Introduction

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2 Peter 1:1-2

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I am excited to start a new series with you this morning. Big surprise, 2 Peter. We're excited about this. I think this is a series that is going to serve our church greatly, not because of me, but because of the letter and the content of the letter.

You see, about 1,954 years ago, a certain man wrote a letter. And that letter just so happened to be the very last will and testament given to a very select community of people. And I think many of us have either seen in movies or we've been to the reading of somebody's will. And in those moments, when somebody passes away and they've left their last will and testament, typically those words carry some weight. They're a little bit more significant than just, "Hey, how's it going?" When we see each other day by day, right? When you know your last words are coming, something significant typically happens, especially when there's something that you have at stake. If you're a beneficiary of that will and testament, you're typically going to give that a little bit more thought.

A couple of famous people that I have been kind of looking into to look up good, last words. And I thought maybe it'd be fun to kind of look at an example of some missed opportunities, some bad last words, so we can kind of compare what happened then to what we're about to read. Somebody like Winston Churchill, you might think, "Okay. That's just the best statesman of the 20th century. He was an orator, he was fiery. He was great. What's his last words going to be?" "I'm bored with it all." And then he died. That's kind of a miss, you kind of fumbled the ball there. That's not a good one.

Steve jobs, creator of Apple, right? Most of us carry his technology around in our pockets. Changed the world. Dying, as he's drifting off into death, all he can say is, "Oh, wow. Oh, wow. Oh, wow." No words of encouragement, no words of consolation for his family. He had none.

Famous composer, Gustav Mahler, very competitive on his deathbed. He could only shout for his last word, "Mozart." Because he's dying, letting us all know, man, he was jealous of Mozart and his ability to compose. But maybe there's a lesson in there. He's chasing the best in his field his whole life. But how sad that at the end of his life, he had nothing else to live for other than, "I didn't get as good as him." But some good lessons in there. Sad words.

But in this letter, in 2 Peter, what we have are these faithful, amazing last final words of the apostle Peter, a man who, as we see his life play out in the gospel, is kind of beset by blunders and saying dumb things and doing rash, irrational things who the Lord Jesus took and molded into a bedrock of his church. A man who matured to be a pastor, a shepherd who established and strengthened churches all throughout the Eastern Roman Empire, right up until the point that he was executed for his faith.

This man's final words in this letter are something of a wonder. They're spent wisely. They're characteristic of a shepherd of God's people, who wants to give them both wisdom for understanding how to live the life of a Christian, but also a strong defense against the false teaching that would try to creep in and pull them away from faithfulness to Christ. He wanted them to be established in the truth, as he says of them in chapter one.

So, for our study this weekend, we're going to spend a little bit of time getting to know this letter. We're going to look at the author of this letter and kind of maybe some of the controversies that people try to dream up about why it might have been somebody else. We're going to look at the audience, the original audience. We're going to ask ourselves this question, "Was this letter written directly to us?" And we're going to look back also at the purpose of this letter. Peter gives us a very clear reason and we want to see how and why the apostle Peter chose to spend his final breaths with these words, giving us this message as his final will and testament.

And so we're going to look briefly at the overall structure. It's not long, but it's important in a study like this, going into a book that might not be as familiar to everyone in the room to understand what is the big picture? What are we trying to see? What is Peter trying to say so that when we see kind of some obscure statements, some weird things in the middle, we don't get lost in the details? It'll all make sense in the flow of context there.

Just as some background, I want to give you some opinions from various commentators throughout history on this little letter in front of you. Who's read 2 Peter? You can just go... Is that the first book you ever decided to read? I'm going to open up my Bible and just go straight to 2 Peter. You might see one day that it should, but however, it doesn't seem to be the book that most people gravitate towards. "Hey, let me grab an accountability partner and let's go read 2 Peter." It's usually something else, but I think that we will see hopefully by the end of today, and as we study through this, that this is an imminently practical book.

But some commentator statements about 2 Peter. Ernest Findlay Scott said of 2 Peter that, "It is the least valuable of any of the New Testament writings." Glowing praise. Michael Green says, "It's a very obscured corner of the New Testament." Good. We're going to shine a bright flashlight on it and see what it has to say for us, because it does not belong in an obscure corner. And Jandy Kelly states, "Scarcely anyone nowadays actually believes that Peter wrote 2 Peter." And I'm like, "I didn't get that memo. I wasn't in that conference room when they decided that, but I guess I am not a prominent enough scholar."

And when he says that, he doesn't mean you. He doesn't even count your opinion as something that matters. Somebody who just simply and truthfully believes what the Holy Spirit says about his own word. We have to believe what the scholars tell us. And so the scholars tell us, "No, it's obviously a different author, so it's not Peter." These aren't really great reviews, right? And it doesn't help that the early church fathers did not reference or preach 2 Peter very much. Didn't affirm it really as much as the other books. I have an answer for that, don't worry.

But modern scholarship, especially evangelical critical scholarship, and I know those are kind of weird phrases, but it just means scholars who think they're better than everybody else and they want to discount what the Bible actually says because they don't believe it's supernatural. So, they basically say 2 Peter is trash heap. You don't need to read it. Doesn't belong in the Bible. Don't even worry about it.

However, I want to show us that both internal evidence and external evidence abounds that this is an authentic word from Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ. First and foremost must be the fact that the very first verse tells us that's who wrote it, and we believe in the doctrine of the preservation of the word of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit sovereignly ordained which books would be preserved for us in His Holy word. And 2 Peter 1:3 actually tells us that. We'll get there.

But the very first verse of the book tells us that Peter wrote this, 1:14 says, "I am about to put off this body. I'm about to be put to death, just as our Lord, Jesus Christ, told me would happen." That sounds like eyewitness first person, "Hey, Peter, you're going to die, okay?" So, he's telling us his own personal testimony. 3:1 also says, "This is the second letter that I, Peter, am writing to you." Pretty obvious here. And yet, scholars would rather trust the lack of external evidence or what they would look at and say, "Well, okay, the early church fathers didn't attest to it very well."

And by the way, when I say early church fathers, that's just a term, if you haven't studied those, that just means the apostles that were the leaders of the church and their disciples, the guys who kind of came after them, after the apostolic age ended, and led the church, we call them the fathers because they wrote a lot of good theology and kind of established some good practice. It's not the same as Scripture, don't get me wrong, but they were good faithful men. So, that's who we call the fathers.

But in reality here, what we're seeing is the early church fathers did not quote 2 Peter very much because it wasn't circulated in the second century because of persecution. Imagine this letter is going to these churches in Asia Minor, where there are Christian hunters going around, looking for churches to put to death. So, somebody's not just going to be walking around like, "Hey, I have a letter from the apostle, come get me." They're going to keep it and hide it and keep it safe until a new emperor rises up and says, "Christianity is okay." Which is exactly what happened, and then the letter started spreading.

And by the time of The Council of Nicaea, all of the leaders of the early church affirmed and recognized 2 Peter as a canonical book. Another point of note, and I think this is the most important argument here. It stands to reason that if 2 Peter, if the content of 2 Peter, was dangerous to false teachers, that false teachers would try to keep it out of your hands. Peter's teaching us, this is what false teachers look like. This is how you can identify them. And they're like, "No, no, you don't need to read that. Let's just keep that one down here."

Of course they're going to do that. They're not going to stand there and allow you to get away with that. I mean, if I was standing up here telling you, "There's false teachers in Gilbert and in Chandler, you want to watch out for them. This is what they do. This is what their ministries look like and why they're false." And one of them walks in the back room and goes, "Yeah, yeah, that's exactly what I do." No, he's going to say, "How dare you be so unloving as to talk to me that way? You're not representing Christ." Well, in fact, all of you should follow me because I love you and I'm representing Christ well, and I have the truth.

Now, how are you going to know the difference? How are you going to know if I'm telling you the truth versus they are telling you the truth? That's why 2 Peter was written. And we have the fact that the Holy Spirit has actively preserved his word for the church. Matthew 5:18 says, "I tell you the truth until Heaven and Earth pass away. Not an iota or a dot," those are the tiniest little markings in Greek, "will pass away from the law until it is accomplished."

Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of God will stand forever." You see, men don't get to decide what's in the Bible. There were lots of books going around early on, lots of letters in the early church that said, "Oh, this is from Paul. This is from James. This is from Peter." And they didn't make it into the canon. Why? Did men just decide, "No, that one doesn't serve my end. That doesn't serve my purpose. No, this one affirms what I believe."

That's what Dan Brown would have you believe. But what we believe is what the Holy Spirit tells us, that He preserves His word. And frankly, you can read these other books. If you want to, go on Google and look up the Gospel of Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter. They're strange. You can tell. As a Christian, you'll recognize immediately that it's heresy. It's false. And there's nothing in 2 Peter that is threatening to the Christian, but there's much that is threatening to the false teacher.

So, men did not choose the cannon. Men recognized what the Holy Spirit led them to, which is His divine word. And they used other scripture to affirm other scripture, called the Analogy of Faith, the rule of faith there, right? So, we have the writings of the prophets, the writings of Jesus affirming the writings of Peter, affirming the writings of Paul, them affirming each other, and them all lining up with each other to show, "This is divine."

And then you have something else that's like, "Okay. Yeah. That's not like these. Yeah. That Gospel of Peter, that was written by... That's garbage. That's written by somebody else." It's obvious. And so the Lord directed the hearts of men to do that. Knowing all of this, we can go into 2 Peter, even though you'll open half the commentaries on 2 Peter, and it'll tell you that it's not a good book and you don't need to listen to it. I want you to be equipped with the information to know that this is an authentic letter from Peter. And that means that we can go to it with confidence, knowing that the Holy Spirit has given it to us to learn something, to glean something, to see its enormous benefit and value for our Christian life.

Amen.

And so that Peter gave us this, directed by the Holy Spirit, as his last will and testament. Very, very important words to give us confidence, establish us in truth and protect us from the era of false teaching.

As we dive into 2 Peter 1-2, we're going to see this, Peter, the apostle gives us an overview of his authorship, his audience, and his purpose for writing this letter. And that purpose is to establish his people in truth and warn them against false teachers and how to identify how false teachers will try to deceive them.

And so just for a little context, the overall picture, the big picture of 2 Peter looks like this: very simple division, three major sections, and they're already marked in your English Bible. Isn't that nice? Chapter one, chapter two and chapter three. Super simple. But this is what they look like. Chapter one discusses the nature of the Christian life. So, what does it mean? What does it look like? What do Christians look like? How do they know truth? How are they established in truth? How do they live? How do they act? How do they worship? How do they grow? Where do they find their authority? And I don't think false teachers would want you to know that.

Second chapter talks about the warnings against false teachers. It shows us what false teachers do, what they look like, what they sound like, how they entice Christians away from the true gospel to a counterfeit gospel. And it warns about the condemnation and judgment awaiting false teachers and any who follow them. I don't think false teachers will want you to know that information either.

And then chapter three discusses the certainty of Jesus Christ's earthly return, common in the early centuries, heresy to say that Jesus was never coming back. All things are going to continue the way they are now. And so you don't have to worry so much about living a righteous, holy life. There's nothing you're waiting for. And so chapter three discusses the assurance of faith in Jesus' return for his church and the false views against Jesus' return. How to recognize false

teacher's assaults on this doctrine and the concluding thoughts from Peter and then concluding encouragement from Peter.

With that context, we're going to start in our study by looking at the first two verses, we're going to read those together, break them down. And so if you would, please stand with me as we read 2 Peter 1-2. We always do this. If you're new here, we do this just out of reverence for God's word. We stand in honor of God's word. 2 Peter 1-2 say this, "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, may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord."

And that is God's word. You may be seated. As you are, please pray with me for our study. Father, we desire nothing, but to be faithful followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has preserved this letter for us, for our good, for our instruction, for our grace and for our peace. I pray, father, that you would honor our study and that you would be with us as we look to your word today in Jesus name. Amen.

Again, as a matter of establishing kind of a foundation of context for the whole letter here, these first two verses are going to show us, are outlined for this morning, and those are those two points are the author, the audience and the purpose. And this will help us to answer some questions before we go on to read. As we begin, we want to look at the authorship of this letter.

Point number one, the author. And again, it may be as simple for us to look at the first two words of this letter and just say, "Duh, Simeon Peter. He's identifying himself." But unfortunately, we live in a fallen world where men have attacked this doctrine of the accuracy of scriptures showing us who the actual authors are. And so we have to kind of meet that challenge and answer and ask the questions, "What purpose does it serve to challenge the authorship of a book of scripture?" I mean, what good does it do to say Peter, didn't write this? And I would say that all depends on what side of the argument you fall.

Because if you fall on the side of the argument of biblical inerrancy and the authority of scripture and the truthfulness of the Holy Spirit, it doesn't do you any good. There's no reason to doubt that the author who is listed on the book wrote the book. However, if you are on the side of false teachers, on the side of undermining biblical inerrancy authority and sufficiency, then doubting the authorship of a book like 2 Peter does you a lot of good because with authorship, and maybe I'd steal a line from Spider-Man, with great authorship comes great authority.

So, if there's a fake author, then the fake letter has no authority, but if it's real authorship from a real apostle, then it is real authority. If it's no longer written by the apostle, I don't have to listen. I don't have to obey. I don't have to follow it. And why would they choose a book like 2 Peter to do that? Begs the question. Why did they choose 1, 2 Timothy and Titus to do that to Paul's letters? Why not do that to the other letters? Because like Fy Lehman, just be nice to each other, forgive each other. Okay. Everybody can do that. That's a nice, loving one another thing.

Why 1, 2 Timothy and Titus? Because those are what we call the pastoral epistles. And in those letters, Paul outlines for Timothy how to do church, how to choose church leaders. What are the qualifications? What are the limitations? How do you preach a sermon? Are women allowed to be in ministry? How do you rebuke people in church discipline? How do you get rid of bad elders? You get rid of all of that stuff, all the authority from the apostles on how to run church, guess what? Now, I'm the boss on how I'm going to run my church, and who gets to be in power and how we're going to do things.

Denial of authority of authorship means I assume all the authority over how I interpret the text. So, it's important for us to look and see when the Holy Spirit says, like it does in the first part of verse one, "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ," that there is no doubt in our minds that the Holy Spirit wasn't obscure. He didn't stutter. He's very clear on who the author is. And it's just important, because again, they want to cast shadows of doubt. In the scholarly world, they look at things and say, "Well, he never referred to himself anywhere else as Simeon Peter. Somebody's trying really hard to look like him." But again, what's the point of having Peter not be the author if there's no authority? So, there's lots of arguments back and forth as to what proves or disproves.

But frankly, what does the Holy Spirit say? Do we trust that or do we elevate the scholarship of men who are trying to undermine scripture over the testimony of the Holy Spirit given clearly to us in the text? Again, they might look at a statement like that, Simeon Peter, a slave and apostle. And they're saying, "That's too gushy. Peter didn't talk like that. Somebody's imitating him and trying to..."

But let me ask you a question. Maybe there's a morbid thing going on. Does anybody like reading obituaries? On Saturday morning, you open the paper, and you look at the obituaries and you see, sometimes you just like to look and see who passed away, but what were their accomplishments? What was their life like? What did they do? And so you'll see things like this, "John Doe, beloved father, cherished husband, faithful friend, honest businessman, chairman of the board, blah." All that kind of stuff.

Well, do you think that during his life, John Doe would walk up to you and say, "Hi, I'm John Doe, faithful husband, cherished friend, honest businessman, chairman of the board. It's nice to meet you." Of course not. It would be ridiculous. But in whatever context you meet him, say you meet him in his boardroom. He might say, "Oh, I'm John. I'm the chairman of the board. Have a seat." Thank you. Okay, great. That's appropriate. Or you go to his house. "Well, this is my house. This is my wife. These are my kids. They're beloved to me." Great. Wonderful.

But you wouldn't take that then in your interaction with him at the end of his life, read his obituary and say this, "This probably isn't the same guy, because he didn't talk about himself with all these gushy terms." That's ridiculous because we understand situationally that it shows honor to recognize somebody's life accomplishments and who they were and all their titles in life, right? It's the last thing people are going to read about them. And I would argue that's what Peter's doing here. He's looking at this opening salutation and saying, "This is how I want to be remembered. I want to be remembered as Simeon, lost and dead in my sins, who was transformed into Peter by Christ, graciously. So, I became a slave, a servant of Christ in His will and He made me an apostle."

He didn't need to come in and be like, "I'm an apostle, I got another letter for you and you better listen." He's saying, "I was Simeon and I was dead and lost in my sins. Jesus graciously transformed me. And I'm His servant, and as an apostle, I'm bringing you His words." That's what he's saying. He's looking at that saying, "This is what my legacy is going to be."

And suffice to say that the Holy Spirit tells us that He preserves His word in Isaiah 40, Matthew 5, Luke 21, 1 Peter 1, Romans 15. The Holy Spirit's not going to allow a forgery or a faker into his Bible. He's had over 2000 years to fix it. I think He's sovereign enough to do that. And He hasn't. So, this letter was indeed written by the apostle Peter, a simple Jewish fisherman who was named Simeon, who Jesus transformed into a follower, a righteous follower of Him and who gave him the ministry of apostleship.

That moves us to point number two: our audience. Peter gives a qualifier here. He says to. That means I'm directing this letter. It's not just a letter to go out into the ether. I'm writing it to people. So, this means it's not for everyone. It means it's to a specific group. So, who was the group? You see, 1 Peter was also written to a specific group. It says, "To the elect of the dispersion who are spread about these churches and cities in Asian Minor," that Peter was helping to shepherd. And he's writing to them because they're facing persecution.

That's the kind of letter that's not written directly to us, but it's for us. We can look over the shoulder and see how Peter is instructing this original audience and what they're going through so that when we go through the same things and all the truth that he has for them, we can take and apply to our lives. And then there are other letters that are written to a general audience.

But even then, the general audience, you could be a part of kind of this class, this general audience. So, who are the exclusive to those that we're talking about too? It says, "To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours." So, we have to figure out what does that mean? Who are these people? And there's a very important reason that Peter says that because anyone else who does not share the same faith, this book will be detrimental to your false teaching. This book is for the strengthening of those who share the same faith. So, what does that mean? It means a faith like the apostles.

The apostles had a faith handed down from Jesus, "Stop your sin, follow me, abandon your life, follow me. You get your righteousness from me. Trust in me, abide in me." That's what he's saying. It's obedient to Jesus and subservient to Jesus and honoring to Jesus and trusting to Christ. It doesn't seek anything else. And if that was the reader, who was just a simple faithful Christian, looking to honor and obey Christ, that letter was for them. Guess what? If that's you, a Christian just looking to honor and obey Christ, trusting in His righteousness for your own, then Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote you a letter.

Now that might sound like, "Okay. Yeah. I'm kind of part of that." If Peter dropped a letter in your mailbox at home, would you want to read it? And it was for you and somebody came along and said, "No, that's probably not. You don't want to read this." This is from Peter. This is for me. Guys, that is what is happening here. If you are a faithful Christian who has obtained a faith of equal standing with the apostles, then Peter wrote this for you.

But not only did he tell us who this letter was written for, but why and how we can partake in this faith. "To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours," how and why can that even happen? Peter says here, qualifies that, "It happens by the righteousness of our God and savior Jesus Christ." We can't even attain to the same faith without Christ. There is no faith without Christ, but he's giving us the how and the why here. If you have your righteousness through Christ, repenting of your sins and trusting only in Him, then you have the same faith as the apostles, believing in the perfect and complete work of Christ on the cross for your salvation, your sin exchanged for His righteousness. That is the faith of the apostles.

And you see, the Bible says that when we do that, that is a gift from God. It is evidence of regeneration of a new spiritual vitality in life. The evidence of a transformed heart, which will be humility before God, an obedience to His word, and a desire to know Jesus more, a desire to follow Him and seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. And so Peter says, If you have a faith like mine, this letter's for you."

And so friends, if that is you, the only question that should be on your heart is, "What are you trying to say then? What's the purpose? Why are you writing this? What's so important that you'd

use your final words to give it to us?" And guess what, Peter gives us an overarching theme of that in verse two. Let's see, as we go to the point number three, the purpose. And the purpose here is given as both a blessing and the means by which you can achieve and attain to that blessing.

We see the blessing in the first part of verse two, and this is such the heart of a general apostle. He says, "May grace and peace be multiplied to you." That is not just a trite, nice thing to say at the beginning of a letter, this is his heart. May grace and peace be multiplied to you, Christian. The grace of God that you need. And by the way, how many of you out there sitting there are just at perfect peace in your heart at all times, nothing wrong, you're good. You trust the Lord perfectly all the time?

No, we live in a world that encroaches in on us and causes us grief and our own sin and our own rebellion in our hearts causes anxiety, causes depression, causes all kinds of effects on us that do not exist in the perfect world that God created for us. But in this sinful, fallen version, we fight against those things, and the grace and peace of God will conquer all of those things for us. Because when there's nothing wrong, you're at perfect peace. But when there's something wrong and we don't trust that God has it all under control, it causes us anxiety and depression and problems. We need to submit ourselves. And the apostle says, "I want grace and peace to be multiplied to you." And so the question is, how? How, Peter? How is that going to happen? How can I attain to those things?

And Peter gives it to us in the next line, "In the knowledge of our God and savior, Jesus Christ." It's like, "Wait a minute. What? I thought grace and peace were just this nice, easy, peaceful, easy feeling, right? That's what the song says. I got a peaceful, easy feeling. What does that have to do with what I know? Inject me with something, give me something to just make me feel better." And Peter's saying, "No, what you need to understand is having a solid foundation of the knowledge of God, that's the soil for your heart's affections and securities. And for out of that joy and love for the Lord, the righteous actions flow."

And guys, that's our wish for a Redeemer Bible Church. It's my wish as a pastor here that you would be filled with the grace and peace of God multiplied to you and the knowledge of our Lord and savior. And that happens how? By not hiding 2 Peter in a corner, by opening it up and showing you what it says. You see, by knowledge, by knowing God, we'll know how to obey God. We'll know what His expectations for us are. We'll know His character. We'll know why He's worthy to be worshiped. We'll know why he deserves our attention and our affection and our praise. Nobody else does. Why does He? The Bible tells us, "Open it up and see the wonders of who He is."

In fact, Peter says in 1:12-13, he's not being pedantic here. He's saying, "Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder." So, you see how gentle he is? He's not saying like, "Jesus told me this and you better listen. I'm the boss." He's not saying that. He's saying Jesus showed you this. I'm showing you this. This is for everyone who loves Jesus. Open the Bible. Let's study. I know, you know it, I'm going to spend my whole life reminding you of it, because this world is going to spend all of its energy, trying to get you to forget it or to doubt it or to distrust.

He's saying, "Fine, I'm going to spend my entire life stirring you up by way of reminder. Gentleness and pointing you to the truth, so you can be established in the truth." And that, my friends, is the purpose of 2 Peter, to help give grace and peace to the people of God and the

knowledge of the truth. Stir them up by way of reminder, give them confidence in their faith and be able to reject and deflect false teachers.

If you're in a church, hopefully it's this one. But if you're visiting, if you're in a church where a pastor is faithfully preaching the word, he's not preaching his opinion, he's not preaching cultural pressures, that's a solid biblical church. I don't care what color the seats are, how's the style of music, that's a biblical church. And that's a pastor that loves you and is trying to protect you. And that's our goal here. We want to expose the word of God to you so that you can be secure in the knowledge of the truth. And God stirred the heart of Peter to write this letter for us so that we would know how to be obedient to Him and follow Him.

Before we finish, I want to remind you of kind of what Peter was going through, what his audience was going through. You see, Peter was in prison, not because he was a jerk or a culture warrior, because he was standing up for his rights. He was in prison for preaching the gospel. It's what we call a death row epistle. He's writing this, knowing that any day now he is going to be put to death. So, this is the very last words he's going to give to his people. And so they carry a special weight of significance.

And his audience by the way, are facing immense persecution, and persecution from the culture, from the government, from other versions of Christianity coming at them saying, "You're only being persecuted, because you believe in this weird version of Christianity. If you would only do Christianity the way we do, the government leaves us alone. Just give up this one little thing over here. I mean, Caesar said that we could openly worship Jesus as long as we sprinkle a little cinnamon and burn a candle and say a prayer for him, it's fine. You're in jail. It's your fault."

And the true church is saying, "I worship Jesus and Jesus alone. And I will not give my worship to any other, even if it is Caesar." And so that's what's going to happen, right? We're going to see versions of this. And the culture is going to give us a way out, "Just preach part of the gospel. Just preach the authorized, government version of the gospel and you'll be fine." And the prince of the power of this world would like nothing more than for all of us to give up on the truth in that way. But I want to ask you a question, does what Peter is going through and what his audience is going through, ring any bells? Sound familiar? Sound like it's encroaching on the horizons?

And if you follow what's going on in Canada, we have brethren to the north who are being put in prison for preaching the truth. And we have brethren in America who are saying they brought it upon themselves because the teachings on LGBTQ, "You can go a little softer on that and you wouldn't be put in jail. This is self-imposed imprisonment. Just follow the law. You'll be fine." And these guys are saying, "No, I'm going to preach the whole council of God's word. And they will be shamed for it by others who call themselves Christians."

And guys, it's only going to get worse here. It's not probably going to be long before in this pulpit, in this room or in that room over there in Gilbert, Arizona, where pastors will be dragged off to prison for preaching the truth. And we will be told, "You can preach this part of the truth." And we will say, "No, thank you. I will preach the whole counsel of God's word. Not afraid of persecution, not afraid of prison."

In fact, persecution, Satan's not learned his lesson in the last 2000 years, causes the gospel to spread, okay? So, we look forward to it. Not because we want to heap it upon ourselves, but because we know that the Lord will accomplish something from it. See, Peter was in prison for preaching the truth. He'd be put to death for preaching the truth. We will do the same if that's

what it comes to. And so, we're going to do something now that I think is important. We're a little over time, I apologize, but I think this is necessary. And this is something that has gone on for centuries in church history. I'm going to read through 2 Peter with us, and this is what I want you to do.

I want you to imagine that this letter was written to you. I want you to imagine that you are a faithful Christian and that your pastors have been dragged off to prison for preaching the gospel. I want you to imagine that you are under government culture and fake Christian persecution coming after you, telling you, "All you need to do is change this one little thing about your faith in Christ, and we will accept you." And ask yourself, are you going to do that to gain safety in the flesh? Or will you stand and be faithful to Christ?

This is going to happen, unless Christ comes back and gathers us and protects us from that. But I want you to prepare your hearts as a reader to think that this could happen here, because it very well could. Okay? And picture God through loving pastoral leadership, giving you this letter to give you courage, to establish you in truth, to give you confidence to avoid falling into the traps of false teaching and to honor Christ, because this could be our reality very soon.

So, 2 Peter 1, you can just listen along and close your eyes. You can read along if you want. Not out loud. Somebody did that yesterday. Don't read out loud with me, but that's okay. 2 Peter 1 says this, "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. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord. 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, by which He has granted to us, His precious and very great promises, so that through them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue. And virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ.

Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have, I think it right, as long as I'm in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon as our Lord, Jesus Christ, made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of His majesty, for when He received honor and glory from God, the father, and the voice was born to Him by the majestic glory, "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven for we were with Him on the Holy Mountain.

And yet, we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts. Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own

interpretation, for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of men. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

But false teachers also arose among the people just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality. And because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep, for if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.

And if He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, and if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, He condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. And if He rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard. Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment. And especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and who despise authority.

Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels though greater and might in power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction. Suffering wrong as the wage of their wrongdoing.

They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blocks and blemishes reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children, forsaking the right way. They have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression. A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them, the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

For speaking loud, boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption for whatever overcomes a person. To that, he is enslaved. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would've been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the Holy Commandment delivered to them, what the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and savior through your apostles. Knowing this, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires, they will say, "Where is the promise of His coming? Forever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately

overlooked this fact, that the heavens existed long ago and the Earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.

And that by means of these, the world that existed was deluged with water and perished, but by the same word, the heavens and the Earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. And then the heavens will pass away with a roar. And the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the Earth and all the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn.

But according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace and count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother, Paul, also wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, as he does in all his letters, when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures."

Everybody look up, eyes up, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior your Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

Amen.

Amen? Guys, that's our hope and our goal for our church. That's what we want for you, to know the truth, to follow Jesus, be faithful to Him, to be able to defend yourself against false teaching. And don't be afraid of the persecution that is surely coming. Be ready for it. Be bold and allow the Lord to use you to spread the gospel through it. Amen?

Amen.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, thank you for the truth that we see in 2 Peter. What a joy it is to know that you love us and care for us enough to provide everything we need to know how to live in a way that honors you and how to be protected against counterfeit versions of Jesus that the world will continually throw at us. Father, please grow and protect our church, grow us in unity and love for your word, for Christ and for one another. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.