

# AN OVERVIEW OF 2 PETER AND A CALL TO GROW IN FAITH

Kate Gooch

## 2 Peter: An overview

This second letter was written shortly before Peter's execution. He knew that his time was short (2 Peter 1:14) and there is both clarity and urgency in his letter. Even unto the end, he was still working hard to teach fellow believers and ensure that they would "*always remember these things after I am gone*" (2 Peter 1:15). There is no sense of sorrow, resentment or bitterness; rather, his dedication and devotion only seem strengthened as his death approaches. Like Paul, Peter introduces his letter by describing himself as a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. Unlike his first letter, Peter doesn't specify any particular regions as recipients of the letter, but writes to those who "*share the same precious faith we have*" (2 Peter 1:1). However, we can assume that this letter would have been sent to those who read the first by virtue of 2 Peter 3:1 ("*This is my second letter to you, dear friends*").

Key themes:

- A call to grow in faith.
- A call to know the truth.
- A call for godly patience.
- A call to end time living.

2 Peter 2:3-11

### 1. A Call

... *make every effort* to respond to God's promises. (2 Peter 1:5)

- a. "Supplement your faith with a generous portion of moral excellence..."

Moral excellence: goodness, virtue, valour

Greek word: *aréte* (2 Peter 1:3)

- b. "...and moral excellence with knowledge..."

*The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know how to comfort the weary. Morning by morning he awakens me and opens my understanding to his will. The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me and I have listened. I have not rebelled or turned away.* (Isaiah 50:4-5, NLT)

*In him lie all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Colossians 2:3, NLT)

*Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.* (Jeremiah 33:3, NKJV)

- c. "...and knowledge with self-control..."

*A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.* (Proverbs 25:28, NLT)

*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.* (Galatians 5:24, NLT)

- d. "...and self-control with patient endurance..."

*Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble and keep on praying.* (Romans 12:12, NLT)

*Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.* (Psalm 37:7, NLT)

*This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.* (Habakkuk 2:3, NLT)

- e. "...and patient endurance with godliness..."

*Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. Physical training is good, but training in godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and the life to come.* (1 Timothy 4:7-8, NLT)

*Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth.* (1 Timothy 6:6, NLT)

- f. "... and godliness with brotherly affection ..."

*The Lord is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness.* (Psalm 145:17, NLT)

*Your kindness will reward you, but your cruelty will destroy you.* (Proverbs 11:17, NLT)

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* (Matthew 9:36, NLT)

g. "...and brotherly affection with love for everyone."

Love: agápē

*Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them...* (Romans 12:9, NLT)

*Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honouring each another.* (Romans 12:10, NLT)

## 2. A promise

*The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter 1:8, NLT)

The call to grow in faith is accompanied with a promise of power and provision.

*By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvellous glory and excellence.* (2 Peter 1:3, NLT)

*Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.* (Galatians 5:25, NLT)

## 3. A choice

*So dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen...* (2 Peter 1:10, NLT)

By the end of the letter, Peter is more insistent, *you must grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 3:18).

Peter was not suggesting that believers are saved by their works, nor was he advocating a return to religious rules and customs as a way of proving or producing godliness. Rather, he is clear that salvation is a gift from God, but having been saved, that we ought to work in partnership with the Holy Spirit and make every effort to grow in faith.

*So then, my dear ones, just as you have always obeyed [my instructions with enthusiasm], not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation [that is, cultivate it, bring it to full effect, actively pursue spiritual maturity] with awe-inspired fear*

*and trembling [using serious caution and critical self-evaluation to avoid anything that might offend God or discredit the name of Christ]. For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfil your purpose] for His good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:12-13, AMP)

## 4. A warning

*But those who fail to develop in this way are short sighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.* (2 Peter 1:9, NLT)

*Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.* (John 15:6, NLT)

## 5. A safeguard

*...Do these things and you will never fall away.* (2 Peter 1: 10, NLT)

## 6. A reward

Peter reminds his friends that there will be a rich eternal reward for those who continue to grow in faith and do not fall away.

*Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter 1:11, NLT)

*...But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So, let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.* (Galatians 6:8-9)

## Conclusion

2 Peter 1:5-7 has been described as a 'ladder of virtues from faith to love,' but this would appear to suggest that once you move from one rung to the next after 'completing' a step. But growing in faith is not a 'checklist' or 'tick box' exercise. Rather, we are to "abound in everything" (2 Corinthians 8:7) and grow in such a way that we increasingly display God's image, divine nature and character.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.* (Psalm 139:13-14, NLT)