

## Book of Second Peter

**“Precious Promises, Perilous Times”  
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### Introduction

1. The book of Second Peter is one of the most contested and neglected books of the New Testament.
2. Many commentators through the ages have questioned the authorship of Peter the Apostle. In so doing, they question its authority and right to be in the Canon of Scripture.
3. Among the objections raised is the fact that there are 369 words used in First Peter that are not found in the second epistle, in which are found 230 words not found in First Peter. The total aggregate of word contrasts is 599, an amazing number for two small books.
4. There are also great differences in style. However, both of these objections could be due to the use of a different amanuensis, or scribe, in each book. The first epistle is very polished Greek, written by Silvanus (1 Pet. 5:12). The second is quite rough, possibly that of Peter’s own hand. Bishop Chase wrote, *“The author appears to be ambitious of writing in a style which is beyond his literary power.”*
5. Just to show how foolish intellectual (theoretical) theologians can be, one argument raised against this book being authored by Peter is the reference to his impending death. Second Peter 1:14–15 seems to refer to the incident in John 21:18–19, where Jesus prophesied Peter’s death by crucifixion. Since the Gospel of John was not written until around 95 AD, the argument is that whoever wrote Second Peter must have lived at a later date, which Peter of course did not. I assume these “brains” forget that Peter was there on the shore of Galilee, to hear the words of Jesus himself, and did not need to read John’s report of it!
6. Others of the “brain trust” of higher (lower) critics, suggest that Peter would never have held the writings of Paul to be equal to the accepted Scriptures of the Old Testament (2 Pet. 3:15–16). Pray tell, why not? Since Paul did (1 Cor. 2:12–13).
7. We will not deal with these objections, as we accept its authority and validity as a work of Peter the Apostle.
8. The theme of the book is the great need for personal spiritual growth in a time when false teachers and teachings were infiltrating the early church (2 Pet. 1:5 with 3:18).
9. Key words/phrases relevant to spiritual growth are *“grace and peace,”* which can be *“multiplied”* as we grow in the *“knowledge”* of our Lord, and exercise due *“diligence”* in the practice of spiritual *“love.”* As a method of instruction, Peter emphasizes the necessity of reminder and repetition (2 Pet. 1:12, 13, 15; 3:1, 2).

10. Peter refers to his earlier epistle (3:1), and the second was probably written within a short time, between 64 and 66 AD. Whereas his first epistle was written to encourage the “pilgrims” suffering persecution and is filled with the promise of Jesus’ return, this second epistle is written to combat false teachers, who perverted grace and denied the return of Christ.

### Some Principles of Bible Study

1. The preeminent law of interpretation is: never violate the context. The entire Bible dominates the individual book; the book dominates the chapter; the chapter, the verse; the verse, the word. A common rule is that the meaning of a word is determined by its use in the context.
2. Follow the law of non-contradiction, also called the Rule of Faith. The Bible is a unit, and therefore cannot contradict itself. Complex or difficult passages should be interpreted in the light of those that are simple and clear in meaning.
3. Go from the general to the specific. Learn the broad message and theme of the book before attempting to interpret individual verses. It is better to view the Bible through a telescope first, then to look through the microscope.
4. Always approach the Word of God with prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide you. The Bible is a supernatural revelation given by God and cannot be mastered by any mechanical approach.
5. Become familiar with the ten major areas of systematic theology. View each passage in light of what it says regarding those main pillars of truth:
  - a. The Bible
  - b. God
  - c. Angels
  - d. Man
  - e. Sin
  - f. Christ
  - g. Salvation
  - h. The Church
  - i. The Holy Spirit
  - j. Prophecy (last things)

Ask, “What does this passage teach me about these areas of truth?” Look for plain truth, not “hidden” or “secret” messages.

6. Follow the principle of repetition emphasized by Peter (2 Pet.1:12, 13, 15; 3:1, 2). Read, and reread, the Bible by books, one at a time, over and over, until you have a grasp of the theme and message of the book. Then, and only then, delve into its particulars and specifics.

7. Recognize that the Bible is a “*living*” book (Heb. 4:12). It lends itself to continued spiritual growth; therefore, no truth or passage will be fully understood all at once. You will always need to keep growing, for you will never know it all!
8. The final key is not how much you know, but how much you live what you know! Joseph lived one of the most victorious lives of the Old Testament by claiming and applying one principle (Gen. 50:20). Go and do likewise.

### Suggested Outline

#### I. The Elements of Spiritual Growth, Chapter 1

Key Verse: 1:4 with 3:17–18. God in His matchless grace has given to us (believers) both precious and powerful promises in His Word, which are able to transform us through steady growth into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

##### A. The All-Sufficiency of God’s Grace, 1:1–4.

1. The Focal Point of God’s Grace, 1:1.
  - a. All the treasures of God’s grace are bound up in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
  - b. These provisions are appropriated when we receive Him by simple faith (cf. John 1:12; 1 John 5:12–13).
  - c. When we believe in Him we attain equal standing and resources held in common by all saints.
  - d. Therefore we should all, like Peter, consider ourselves “a bondservant of Jesus Christ.”
2. The Inherent Power of God’s Grace, 1:2–3.
  - a. To receive God’s grace is to possess peace (Rom. 5:1). Both can be “*multiplied*” by spiritual growth.
  - b. The knowledge of God through Christ brings power for godly living (Rom. 12:2; 1 Tim. 3:16).
  - c. Such a life will be an open display of both the character of God (glory) and His power (virtue).
3. The Channel and Purpose of God’s Grace, 1:4.
  - a. God’s grace comes through His Word. If we want greater grace, we need more of His Word.
  - b. The appropriation of His powerful and precious promises makes us partakers of His nature, and demonstrates our delivery and victory over the world and its’ corruption (1 John 5:4–5).

##### B. The Diligence and Development of Spiritual Growth, 1:5–15

1. The Stair Steps of Spiritual Growth, 1:5–7.
  - a. There will be no growth in the believer’s life without diligence—strong inner motivation.

- b. In order for grace to be “*multiplied*,” the believer needs to begin a daily “addition” to his faith.
- c. Spiritual growth begins on the foundation of faith in Christ (1 Cor. 3:11).
- d. To this is added “*virtue*,” from verse 3, the active power of God (reliance on the Holy Spirit).
- e. Then comes “*knowledge*,” the experiential understanding and application of God’s Word.
- f. With knowledge comes power for “*self-control*” from within, an inner source of authority.
- g. Once attained, this control must be sustained, through all of life’s circumstances and changes.
- h. The fruit of active endurance is “*godliness*” or “Christ-likeness” (Rom. 8:29, 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).
- i. The likeness of Christ produces a love for members of the family of God, “brother-love.”
- j. The pinnacle of growth is “*love*,” which is manifested toward all men, especially the unlovely.

Note: Each of these “additions” is practical, experiential, and ultimately relational in nature. You simply cannot grow by an academic knowledge of Scripture. Life is lived, not contemplated!

- 2. The Blessings Resulting from Growth, 1:8–11.  
Four benefits and blessings are listed as the consequence of persistent spiritual growth:
  - a. First, growth keeps one from being spiritually barren and unfruitful. Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Paul said, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.”
  - b. The believer living a “fruitless” life also enters a spiritual blindness, a hardening of the heart to the miracle of his or her own forgiveness and spiritual birth (compare Eph. 4:17–19, 5:14–18).
  - c. Diligent spiritual growth brings increasing assurance and conviction of one’s calling, and acts as a prevention against permanent failure in the spiritual life. Many believers never even begin the “*race set before*” them (Heb. 12:1), but the growing believer will not only run his race, he will finish it (2 Tim. 4:7).
  - d. Finally, consistent growth guarantees a rich entrance into the Kingdom, complete with “*treasure in heaven*” in the form of eternal reward (Matt. 6:20–21; 1 Cor. 3:13–14).
  
- 3. The Role of Rejection in Spiritual Growth, 1:12–15.  
The “*reason*” given by Peter for his review and repetition is two-fold. First, that they might live productive lives worthy of blessing and reward. Secondly, that he must soon lay aside his “*tent*,” his earthly body, just as Jesus had foretold (John 20:18). Just imagine, after witnessing the

crucifixion of Christ, living the last 35 years of your life knowing every day that you would be crucified in the end.

C. God's Word a Firm Foundation for Living, 1:16–21.

1. Based on Eyewitness Accounts of the Apostles, 1:16–18.  
The Apostles saw, heard, and experienced the life of our Lord (cf. 1 John 1:1–4). Then, just as Jesus promised (John 14:26, 15:26–27, 16:13), the Holy Spirit reminded and guided them to record the truth of Scripture.
2. Based on Inspiration of the Authors, 1:19–21.  
Peter says their experiences “*confirmed*” the prophetic word of the Old Testament. The words of the prophets were realized in the life of Christ. The Word of God is the light that shines in the dark of this world, which guides our path toward the “dawning” of Christ’s return, preceded by the “*morning star*” rising, which may refer to the rapture of the church. The morning star rises before the dawning, and is followed by the darkest time of the night (the tribulation period).

II. The Enemies of Spiritual Growth, Chapter 2

A. The **Denial** of the False Teachers, 2:1–3.

1. They deny the truth of Christ’s finished work on the cross. If the cross is not sufficient for salvation, then “works” of some form must be added. Note that though they deny the sufficiency of His work, Christ has “*bought*” them.
2. They deny the “*way of truth*,” which is sanctification in righteousness by the power and work of the Holy Spirit. They “*turn the grace of God into “license”*” to sin, (Jude 4). They deny that grace and faith produce obedience.
3. Their very teachings and conduct deny any true relationship to the Savior.

B. The **Doom** of False Teachers, 2:4–11.

1. Like the angels who sinned in the time of Noah (Gen. 6:2; 1 Pet. 3:19–20; Jude 6), these will also meet their allotted judgment from God.
2. They will also be judged just as Sodom and Gomorrah. Note the connection of the fallen angels to the judgment of Noah’s time (Jude 6–7; 2 Pet. 3:4–6), as well as to the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah.
3. God’s judgment will be equivalent to their “daring” sinfulness (verses 10–11). The word means “to be bold to the point of audacity,” here, in the face of God.

Point: We should not overlook the truth in verses 5 and 7–9 that as well as judging, God is able to deliver the godly out of times of trial and temptations.

C. The **Depravity** of False Teachers, 2:12–17.

1. Like “*natural brute beasts*” these deceivers live only to gratify their own appetites. “*Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly*” (Phil. 3:19).
2. They will receive their “*wages*,” paid in full (verses 13, 15). The just payment for their conduct is utter ruin and eternal corruption.
3. These religious “rock stars” participate in church gatherings, “carousing” in their own delusions. They have the “eyes full of an adulteress,” meaning they cannot look at a woman without seeing her as a potential source of sexual gratification.
4. The “way of Balaam” (Num. 22) involved a three-fold perversion of ministry:
  - a. He used ministry for personal enrichment and financial gain (Jude 11).
  - b. Next, he used ministry to promote immorality (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14).
  - c. Finally, the way of Balaam is closely related to the practice of the Nicolaitans. Balaam comes from the Hebrew *Bela Ha-am*. Nicolaitan comes from the Greek *Nikao ho laos*, both meaning “to conquer the people.” These systems of teaching implement a hierarchy over the people of God, the “laity,” to impose a system of religious control over them.

D. The **Deceptions** of False Teachers, 2:18–22.

1. They are full of empty promises, leaving their followers bereft (Jude 12–13).
2. These charlatans use “*great swelling words*,” a phrase that means to “use language that is grossly exaggerated, like a swollen, rotting corpse.”
3. They deceive by appealing to the lusts of the immature, and lead new believers into spiritual bondage worse than what they escaped (Matt. 12:45).
4. The final indictment (verse 22) appears to apply to the false teachers, who in their unregenerate state come to their end according to the ancient proverb (Prov. 26:11).

III. The Expectation of the Saints, Chapter. 3

A. Our Expectation Attacked by Scoffers, 3:1–9.

1. Peter’s goal is to “wake up” believers purified by grace (cf. Eph. 5:14).
2. His “*reminder*” is to heed the words of O.T. prophets and N.T. apostles. Here Peter claims inspired status for his own words, as well as Paul’s, verse 16.
3. This charge is based on the sure knowledge that the last days’ trend is toward scoffers, mockers, and denials of our Lords return.

4. These “intellectuals” build their case on three ideas prevalent today:
  - a. Time—if Christ were going to come He would have done it by now.
  - b. Science—pseudo-science claims the universe is a constant, without end.
  - c. Denial—they “willfully” forget (deny) the flood of Noah, and no wonder, for if God judged the world in the past, He may again!
5. Peter reminds us of two vital truths, which should sustain our faith:
  - a. God is the author of time, and not subject to it, as we are. To Almighty God, two thousand years comes to pass “*quickly*” (Rev. 3:11, 22:7).
  - b. God is working according to His eternal redemptive purpose, for the salvation of souls (Luke 3:3, 5). Jesus Christ died for all men (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 John 2:2), and God gives to all ample opportunities to come to faith (John 6:7–11; 1 Tim. 2:3–6).

B. Our Expectation Assured by His Promised Coming and Victory, 3:10–16.

1. Peter does not deal with the Rapture, except in vague terms. Instead, he looks to the “*Day of the Lord*,” which includes the seven-year tribulation period leading up to the Second Advent (cf. Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1–11; Obad. 15–17; Zeph. 1:7–18).
2. It is important to point out that the “Day of the Lord” is a specifically O.T. term referring to the Second Advent, while the “Day of Christ” is a N.T. term, which refers to the Rapture (1 Cor. 1:8, 3:13, 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:12, 18). If you will contrast these references you will see that the “Day of the Lord” is a day of wrath and terror, while the “Day of Christ” is a day of joy and victory.
3. Peter’s focus is more on the consummation of all things, when these scoffers and this present earth will have been judged, and the “Day of God” (the eternal state or heaven) will have come. Here only righteousness will dwell forever.
4. In light of our “*blessed hope*” (Titus 2:13) we ought to live accordingly.
  - a. We should remain steadfast in our faith in His promises (v. 12–13). The word “*hastening*” suggests our obedience speeds His coming.
  - b. We should be all the more “*diligent*” (cf. 1:5, 10) to live “in peace,” that is a life of purity consistent with our reconciled status as believers in Christ.
  - c. We should seize the opportunity of God’s “*longsuffering*” (verses 9, 15) to be faithful witnesses to a lost world of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.
  - d. We should take necessary precautions against false doctrines, lest we also are “*led away with the error of the wicked*” and thereby “*fall from [our] own steadfastness*” (verse 17). Only persistent spiritual growth can prevent this, as we “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” Thus Peter concludes by pointing us back to 1:5–7.

Point: Notice that Peter defers to Paul's greater insight into the doctrine of the Rapture and Second Coming (verses 15b–16). Instead of attempting to review Paul's teaching, he refers them to Paul's epistles for further instruction.

Conclusion: 3:17-18.

1. Every generation of history is beset with false teachers and teachings that are spiritually destructive and damaging to the family of God.
2. The only defense against these religious con men is genuine spiritual growth (1:5–7) resulting in a purified and transformed life (1:8–11, 3:11–14).
3. Spiritual growth comes from receiving the teaching of the Word of God (1:3–4, 12–15; 3:1–2). However, beware of teachers who try to “tie” you to them and keep you from learning from anyone else. This is the very error of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, imposing a religious hierarchy that dominates God's people and robs them of spiritual freedom. No teacher “owns” his students; they are the Lord's.
4. The best way to spot false teachings is to be well instructed in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. I suggest you get either Ryrie's Basic Theology, or Major Bible Themes by L.S. Chafer. Go through them and review them often!
5. A good text for identifying the common errors of cults is The Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin.
6. For good apologetic support against “so-called science,” get one of Josh Mc Dowell's books, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, or the revised New Evidence that Demands a Verdict. These books can usually be found in your local Christian bookstores, on Amazon, or similar sites. Don't just buy them and shelve them—get into them and study!
7. May God use this study to guard your souls against the rampant heresies of our day, and purify you for His service, to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.