

## 2Peter 1:1 Introduction

As we begin our study this morning it is my objective to start with an overview of what this letter is all about, who wrote it, and to whom it was written. What year was it written and why it was written? We'll be able to answer some of these questions. Some we won't be able to answer conclusively.

It should be noted that the second epistle of Peter had a rocky road when it comes to being initially accepted by some in the church. There were those who felt that this letter had no place in the canon of Scripture. I'm not going to get into that debate in this study because for all of the objections to this letter being authentic and inspired of God, there are many other reasons why it is accepted as the living word of God Almighty.

If we were to bow to all of the higher critics of the Scriptures we would be left with only a fraction of the bible we now possess. The truth of the matter is we possess 66 books of the bible. 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. All of the O.T. books were immediately accepted and all of the N.T. books were identified and accepted by Christians as the word of God from the very earliest days after being written.

Simply because a particular church council debated the matter did not mean these letters were not already in circulation and being used to edify, encourage and build up the faith of the body of Christ world-wide, as they were accepted as inspired of the Holy Spirit.

And so when we come to second Peter we can be assured that this letter is God's written word to us. Now, let's consider some of the questions we posed in the beginning. The first thing we want to know is who wrote this letter?

The name given in the beginning of this letter is the name Simon Peter. Actually the earliest manuscripts have it as Simeon Peter. One of the reasons critics denounce this letter is for this very reason. This is an unusual way of addressing the author since it is very rare that Peter would be addressed in this way.

But it should be pointed out that it is not the only time he is addressed this way. In fact, James, the Lord's half-brother, when dealing in Jerusalem with the controversy of the law being added

to the gospel, calls Peter by the name he originally had prior to Jesus changing his name.

ACT 15:13 "When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me.<sup>14</sup> Simon (Greek Simeon) has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself."

We also see both names being used of Peter in the gospels.

MAT 4:18 "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen...."

LUK 22:31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat."

This was just before Peter denied Jesus three times. But what's interesting is that this incident is after Jesus gave Simon or Simeon, the name of Peter. He calls him Simon instead of rock, which is what Peter means. We would see that he would be anything but a rock right up to the crucifixion of our Lord.

But the point is that simply because the author chooses to identify himself as Simeon Peter, instead of just Peter, as he does in the first epistle, does not detract from the authenticity of Peter being the author.

But who was he writing to? Well, here we have somewhat of a problem because unlike his first epistle where he makes it clear who he's writing to: "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,..." (1Peter1:1), in this epistle he makes no specific mention of his recipients.

This is why it is often referred to as a general epistle which simply means it was meant to address all the saints generally and that it was meant to be delivered to all the churches without addressing any one particular church. And yet, it would appear that this second epistle of Peter was personal in nature.

In fact, when we come to the third chapter it is quite clear that there is a specific group of people he has in mind.

2PE 3:1 "Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking."

If this is the second letter to the same group being addressed in 1Peter, we then know to whom this letter was addressed, which means we know something of what they've been through in the past and what this second letter was trying to accomplish.

Remember, in the first letter Peter was trying to encourage of group of people who were being persecuted for their faith in Christ.

1PE 1:6 "... for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.<sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Peter then ends his letter in this way.

1PE 4:13 "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."

1PE 5:7-11 "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."

Peter was concerned that their trials would cause them to look back to the world and possibly forget the grace of God which was available to them. He closes by reminding them that it is the God of grace who will restore them and make them strong, firm and steadfast.

And now this second letter comes along seemingly picking up where the last left off as he begins to once again encourage them in their faith as we will see.

At this point I'd like to give a general overview or outline of this letter which will be instructive for a broad understanding of how this letter will be an encouragement to these Christians and us as well, and then we'll go back and begin with verse one and work our way through this letter.

But before we do that it's important to understand the time in which this letter was written. One of the reasons the first letter was written is because it was a time in church history where persecution of Christians was just beginning. This was just before the time the emperor Nero came to power which leads many to believe that the first letter was written around A.D. 63 or 64.

This second letter leads us to believe that Peter's life is about to end which means that it was probably written shortly before A.D. 68 which is when Nero's reign would come to an end.

2PE 1:13-15 "I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things."

What this means is that there was a great deal of tension in the Roman world especially in the city of Rome. Christians were fearing for their lives in many places and yet they continued to carry on serving their Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and in the midst of this there were other problems which needed to be addressed.

Some of these problems included false teachers who were springing up in the church trying to lead many astray. And this is one of the main reasons this particular letter was written.

2PE 2:1 "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -bringing swift destruction on themselves."

One of the other issues Peter addresses here is eschatology, the study of the last days. And the reason he brings this up is because the future promises concerning Christ affect our present reality and the way in which we hope in our God.

Many of the false teachers of that day mocked the promises of Christ's return and Peter points this out in this letter as well.

2PE 3:3-10 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by

water. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (burned up)

It's in this context that Peter encourages his readers to consider the way in which they live for the Lord in their daily lives and he sums it up at the end of this letter.

2PE 3:11-14 "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you wait eagerly for the day of God to come. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

There were many things which diverted the attention of these Christians away from their Lord and Savior and as a result it would have been very easy to slip into apathy and just let the world go by and fall into every false doctrine that was blowing in the wind. Some of these teachers together with their false doctrines would try and steal their hope away.

When you lose hope you lose the will to fight. Peter knew the importance of fighting to the end in serving his Lord and he wanted these Christians to understand that despite the hardships and the attacks of the enemy there is still a reason to go forward and look to that blessed hope and live in a way that demonstrates that hope in our lives to the glory of God.

This is a letter of hope and encouragement, as well as a letter which once again addresses our battle orders. Peter was undoubtedly in the thick of it. There seems to be an indication that he wrote this letter from Rome as he probably did the first one. (1Peter 5:13)

Like Paul, who also gave his life for Christ, he was always serving the church despite any danger to himself which was in total

contrast to those early days when he denied his Lord three times. And so we come to our text.

2PE 1:1-2 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

As we mentioned earlier this is somewhat of a unique introduction as Peter uses both names. One name associated with his life before Christ and the other name after he came into the company of the disciples and our Lord.

As to why he uses both names there have been many explanations. Some have suggested that Peter, using the name Simeon, doesn't want to forget where he came from prior to the Lord calling him out, showing how the grace of God was working in his life.

The name Peter, which means rock, was a name whereby Jesus would use him as one of the pillars of the faith in taking this gospel to the nations.

Ultimately we don't know why Peter uses both names. It may have been something as simple as wanting to identify with both Jew and Gentile since the name Simeon is the Hebrew form of Simon and the name Peter is the Greek form for rock.

But, it is interesting that he continues by identifying himself as a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. In his first letter he simply starts by saying, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,..." (1PE 1:1)

In this second letter he adds a bond-servant. This is exactly what Paul called himself on a variety of occasions. The Greek word for bond-servant is *doulos* which means a slave, and it infers one who is devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests.

It's amazing how many in the Church today would approach their Christianity in a way that would seem to exclude this idea of being Christ's slave. I don't think any of us cherish the idea of being anyone's slave from a human standpoint. And yet from a spiritual standpoint everyone is the slave of someone. We are either a slave of this world and the prince of the power of the air or we are slaves of the One who purchased us with His own blood.

The question is who will we be in subjection to? A slave master who is cruel and only has our destruction in mind or a loving Master who has called us to Himself to spend eternity with Him in His presence?

Peter knows the importance of being a faithful slave who loves his Master, but he also knows he's been called to serve as a slave in a particular capacity. That capacity is to be an apostle. As I've taught on numerous occasions the office of apostle does not exist today in the same way it did with the original apostles.

If you're interested in the teaching on this particular gift of the Holy Spirit you can get my tape on this subject. Suffice it to say that the word apostle means one sent. This is broad enough to include every Christian who has been called to come unto Christ, but also one who is then sent out into this world to faithfully represent Him.

In this sense we are all apostles. But that is not the sense in which Paul and Peter uses the term in their day. The apostles are to the New Testament, what the Prophets were to the Old Testament. They were special representatives who were the mouthpiece for God to the world.

The apostles, like the prophets of old, wrote down the very words of God as the Holy Spirit moved them. Even those with the N.T. gift of prophecy in Peter's day would never equate themselves with the apostles as delivering the very words of God meant to be a part of the written word of God we have in our possession today.

This is in part what Peter meant in 2PE 1:19-21 "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Peter understood his role but he also understood whose apostle he was. He was not some lone ranger who was not held accountable or who made up his own rules as he went. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Remember, Peter had spent over three years with Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. He was a personal friend of our Lord's

in a very unique way. And so when he addresses himself as a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ he is saying that, 'the way in which Jesus personally called me to Himself I take seriously.'

Peter is simply continuing and expanding the ministry he already had to some degree while Jesus was alive before His resurrection and then after. When our risen Lord commissioned Peter to feed Christ's sheep Peter knew this was an expansion of his duties which Jesus had previously given him.

That was at the beginning of his ministry, after Christ's resurrection. This letter is at the end of his ministry and yet he's still found faithful serving the Lord as a bond-slave and apostle.

But notice who he is addressing here in the first verse. Though he doesn't identify these people by name or region he does identify them as fellow believers.

2PE 1:1 "... To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

Here Peter is addressing those who have received the same faith he and the other apostles have. The NIV, the KJV and the NKJV all use the term precious when referring to this faith. The NAS uses the term "same kind", which infers to be held in equal honor of equal value.

In other words, this faith we hold to in the Lord Jesus Christ is not some special club only the early 12 disciples got to share in. It was not limited to the apostles, nor to the elders or deacons of any particular church. This faith, and here it is not referring to a system of doctrines of salvation, but on the relationship it produces, is for all who would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter is telling these people and you and me that the very faith which enables him to be an apostle and friend of Jesus, who walked this earth with Peter, is the exact same faith we now have that enables us to have the same relationship as Peter has with Jesus Christ.

Peter has nothing on us when it comes to being reconciled to the Father. He has nothing on us when it comes to being forgiven of the penalty of sin. He has nothing on us when it comes to knowing that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ.

We all stand in the same faith that believers 2,000 years ago had. You talk about a spiritual connection and unity. This is what Peter



is conveying here. It is a precious faith because of the one in whom we trust.

But notice why we are all able to share in this precious faith. It didn't just happen. There was a specific reason. It is "through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ..."

Two very important things should be noticed here in this verse. 1) Peter addresses the righteousness of Christ. 2) He addresses Christ as God and Savior.

1) When we speak of the righteousness of Christ we are talking about the perfection of Christ. We are talking about His perfect nature being translated into His obedience to the Father which enabled Him to secure a right standing for us through what He did on our behalf.

This is why it's impossible for any person to approach God in his own righteousness. There is no one who is righteous before God because there is no one who is perfect, without stain or blemish. Remember, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

EPH 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."

If this is the case, and it is, then we need someone who has a righteousness before God that will stand the test of perfection and we need this person to give us His righteousness to take before the Father as though it were ours.

The problem is that no one outside of God can forgive sins. You might remember on one occasion where Jesus was about to heal a man who was brought before Him. We read about in

MAT 9:2-7 "Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." And the man got up and went home."

These people realized that only God can make such a bold statement: "Your sins are forgiven." And that's exactly the point. Jesus Christ is God. And that's exactly what Peter says in our text.

2PE 1:1 "... To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:..."

If Jesus Christ is not God, then Jesus Christ is not our Savior and we are still in our sins. Praise God that we can praise Jesus who is our God. It is because of Jesus who is God that we can have a relationship with Him through so precious a faith that Peter shared in.

By the way Thomas realized this as well when he encountered the risen Christ and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God".

One more thing to point out here before bringing this text to a close today. Peter says that this faith has been received by both himself and the church to whom he writes. If salvation is a gift then every aspect of it, including the faith to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is a gift, especially in light of the deadness of man's very nature.

To be able to receive justification necessitates the faith to embrace the One who justifies. The entirety of salvation is received from above including our faith which Paul points out in the verse quoted above.

**Ephesians 2:8-9**<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

There is no better way to start a letter of encouragement than to start with the only One who is able to give life and this One is none other than the God of Moses who said, "The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name." (EXO 15:2-3)

Rejoice in the precious faith that Peter rejoiced in and gave his life for as a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ. The same God and Savior who loved him and gave His life for Peter is the same God and Savior who has defeated sin and death and calls us to Himself to be with Him forever. That forever starts today.