

Today we're beginning our new series on 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. It's a letter that Peter wrote, that he intended to be 'a voice from the grave' (even for his original readers) ,, which (in my view) makes this letter, 'somewhat unique' ...

Most of the time, when we're studying one of the letters (epistle if you like fancy words) (written by one of the Apostles), we're essentially reading someone else's mail. **Most** of these letters were written to churches, who were dealing real issues, that needed to be addressed at a particular point in time. And we thank God, for those letters, because now **we** get to read them. And so often, when we read these letters, they speak to real issues; and real crises of faith that **we** have, at **our** current point in time...

But when Peter wrote **this** letter, yes, there may have been some current issues that he was addressing,,,, But the Lord had revealed to Peter, that his remaining life on this earth was very short. And it wasn't long after he wrote this letter, that Peter was executed for his faith in The Lord Jesus Christ.

*I understand it was around the year 64AD<sup>i</sup>, when Peter was crucified. And at his request, he was crucified upside-down, because he didn't consider himself to be worthy, to die in the same way as his Lord.*

And Peter has his imminent death in mind as he writes this letter. And he wants the church he's writing to, to be reminded of a few things. You see, Jesus had revealed to Peter (**years earlier**), that there would be false teachers and false prophets<sup>ii</sup>, who would try and twist the truth of the Gospel,,, And Jesus had **also** given Peter a very great

responsibility, when He said to him, “Peter, do you love me?...; Feed my lambs....; Tend my sheep....; Feed my sheep<sup>iii</sup>”.

And this is what Peter’s doing: Peter is loving Jesus, by tending and feeding Jesus' sheep. And he’s making sure the sheep know how to find good tucker, when Peter’s no longer around...

He’s giving them a reminder to **hold fast** to what they were taught by the **Apostles**, and to not be led astray by new teachings – by teachings that might have an appearance of being ‘spiritual’, but are nothing more than “cleverly devised myths (or man-made make-believe)”...

So, Peter identifies himself as being “an apostle”. What’s that??? We don’t have apostles any more. Some people may have apostle-like gifts, such as a missionary, who takes the seeds of the Gospel, and sows them in a place where the Gospel hasn’t been preached. (gift of apostleship)

But I’d be very wary of anyone who claims to be an apostle today, because often they’re claiming for themselves, an authority beyond what has been given by God. You see, while the Greek word “ἀπόστολος” (apostolos) means “one who is sent (as an envoy)”, in the early church, the **office** of an apostle (position description designated as an Apostle) meant that this person has been recognised by the church, as having authority to nail down and establish & teach what the Gospel is, because (usually) they’d received teaching from Jesus

Himself, and the Apostles had been **eye-witnesses** to the resurrected Lord.

The testimony of the Apostles, is what we now have recorded in the New Testament. And so all matters of faith and belief, **must** line up with what the Apostles taught. If it's not consistent with what the Apostles taught, it's not from God.

And if anyone ever says to you, "God's given me a new revelation", well you test that revelation, and if that (so-called) 'new revelation' conflicts with what the Apostles taught, well don't listen (even for a minute), because they're a false teacher...

This isn't complicated. What it means, is "Don't just accept the teaching of man. Turn to the Scriptures. What do the Scriptures say?"

But having said that, in a few weeks' time, we're going to **also** learn, to be careful that when the Scriptures **are** read, and when the Scriptures **are** quoted, that they're not being "twisted/distorted". In other words, whenever somebody quotes from the Bible, "Are they accurately representing what God is saying?" Or have they used a verse (out of its context), to say something completely different, to how it originally meant?

But we're getting way ahead of ourselves now – we'll get to that in a few weeks.

So Peter is reminding them, “Hold fast to what you were taught by the Apostles. **They** have authority, and we should respect that”. – That’s what’s going to come out in this letter... But in true Christian humility, **before** Peter reminds them of his authority as an Apostle, first he describes himself as servant/slave of Jesus Christ...

You see, it’s not because Peter is a great man that he has this authority. He’s but a slave... But he’s a slave of Jesus Christ. And what a calling that is. I was reminded of that calling, when I noticed the way that he introduced himself. He called himself “**Simon Peter**”. “Simon” was the name his parents gave him (Simeon {Hebrew}), but when Jesus called him as a disciple:

John 1: (ESV)<sup>42</sup> ..... Jesus looked at him and said, “**You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas**” (which means Peter). (Which means “Rock”).

And Peter – before he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he was nothing like a rock, but that changed (dramatically). After Jesus was raised from the dead, He sent his Holy Spirit upon the church, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter became bold for Jesus – Peter became the rock that Jesus had named him....

And so, Simon was called, to become Peter, a lowly slave of Jesus Christ, but **also** a rock, and an authoritative Apostle of Jesus Christ.

So, that's the bloke who's writing the letter. And here we are, 2 pages into the message, and we haven't even got to the address yet. And that's not unusual.

Something that I've noticed, every time we've studied one of the letters of the Apostles, is how **rich** in theology, the **opening** of the letter is. I don't know about you, but for me, when I'm reading the bible, often I just skim over these bits, but when we take time to study, even these opening words, the richness is so rewarding.

They tend to remind us:

- of Jesus Christ;
- who we are in Christ;
- (often) Sovereign will of God;
- His goodness...
- grace of God;
- mercy of God

And the way Peter addresses this letter, I want you to understand, that this is who **we** are.

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ:

And to unpack that address — wow. (PO Box 357)

*Do we ever get to see true equality in this world?*

*Even in political systems and institutions, where “**Justice** is supposedly blind” and “All are supposedly equal...” I think we all know **very well** that some are more equal than others. There's no real equality in this world.*

As the Proverbs teach us,

- the rich rule over the poor;
- they're the ones who have the power.
- famous...

But in Christ, all disciples of Jesus, have an equal standing before God – you can count on that.

- Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins, right???
- And when we confess our sins, He cleanses us of our sins, right???
- He makes us pure.
- He makes us holy....
  
- Are some more pure than others?
- Are some more **holy** than others? ; or
- Does it have something to do with our starting point? If I started out as a pretty decent sort of a bloke, does that mean that Jesus makes me into a top-tier Saint, while someone that started out as a dirty rotten scoundrel ends up a bottom-tier Saint???

Not at all. When you came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in God's eyes, you are on an equal standing with the apostle Peter. Not because Peter was so wonderful; Not because you are so wonderful, but because now when God looks at you, what He sees is the righteousness of His son.

And Peter says: this **by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ**. Do you understand this? {gravity}

Jesus is not only “saviour”, Jesus Christ is **God** – He is **our God and Saviour**<sup>iv</sup>.

Now, in this sentence, “**the righteousness**” of God means fairness/justice of God... You see, God’s whole plan of salvation, revolves around “**The love of God**”, and “**the righteousness/justice of God**”. Because God is perfect in righteousness, He cannot fellowship with the impure... But that presents a bit of a problem for us, doesn’t it? , because we are sinful creatures.

But because He loves us so much, He had to find a way of getting rid of that impurity. God hates **sin** so much, and He loves **us** so much, He gave His beloved Son that we can be set free, and become pure and holy...

No one is more holy than the other. In the eyes of God, the Apostle Peter is of no higher standing than I am; I am of no higher standing than you are...

You know, we seem to live in the age of the celebrity Christian...

- Christian rock star;
- Christian sportsman;
- Christian businessman;
- Christian author;
- Christian actor;
- celebrity preacher
- celebrity worship-leader...

I want you to know, in the eyes of God, these are of no higher standing, and have no privileged status, over the most

unknown; and uncelebrated; simple; nobody, who comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ...

So, that's the address, now the greeting. How would you greet somebody?

- G'day;
- How ya goin'?
- 'sup
- "I hope you are well"

Peter's a bit more spiritual than that:

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

Because we are Christians – because our faith is in the **Prince** of Peace, grace and peace are not only available – the blessing of God, is to receive grace and peace in abundance.

You see, this is the type of “knowledge” he’s talking about. He’s **not** talking about “knowing **about** God”.

- Knowing **about** God won't bring me peace, unless I **know** Him.
- Knowing about **Jesus** won't bring me peace, unless I know Him; And
- I might even know about **grace**, but I won't experience Grace, unless I know Jesus as My Lord
  
- It's about **knowing** God;
- It's about **knowing** Jesus;

- It's about having a relationship with Our Lord...

Because Jesus is Lord, that means we submit to Him. We're certainly not on an equal footing with Jesus. He's King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and like Peter, we're slaves. But we're slaves in **relationship** with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now, an abundance of Peace, doesn't mean that everything's going to go well for me (by worldly standards) – think about Peter – he knows he's soon to be executed. And yet he's filled with grace and peace, so much that his prayer, is that grace and peace would be multiplied to **us**...

So, where does this grace and peace come from? Well, it's all about what Jesus has done. What comes next in the letter, is a very long sentence. (Greek-47words, English-68), so I'm going to break it down.

Why do we have Grace and Peace?

God has given us a grant. By His divine power (because God is God), He's given us everything we need for life and godliness... BTW, that's not really talking about 2 separate things. What it means is, God's given us everything we need, for a Godly life.

And that should be our aim, shouldn't it – to live lives that are Godly.

What's Godliness look like?

- have a proper attitude toward God;
- have a desire for God's will; and
- it's to have a manner of life reflects the God whom we worship.

You see, when we **know** God, we also know what He's called us to:

He's called us to his **own** glory and excellence ... As disciples of Jesus, that's what He called us to – to his **own** glory and excellence.

Within this letter, Peter's going to remind us of the time when **he** got to see the glory of Jesus revealed, (at what we know as the transfiguration)... And he's going to point us, to the future promise of God. Peter only caught a short glimpse of the glory of God at the transfiguration, but God has granted us, that we will participate in this glory, and we will experience this glory... but not yet...

You see, 'living the Christian life', is about "the now, but not yet"...

Do you understand this? By faith in Jesus:

- We **are** saved;
- We are **being** saved; and
- We will **be** saved.

It's the now, and the not yet.

- By the blood of Jesus, we **are** made holy; we are made righteous,,,,, Now...
- But sometimes, I don't feel at all holy.
  
- God has granted us eternal life;
- But we die, and are yet to be raised;
  
- There will be no more sickness and disease;
- and yet now, faithful disciples of Jesus, get sick; get cancer; and every single one of them, thus far, has eventually died

Now, but now yet... Which is why Peter can say **he** [God] **has** granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you **may become** partakers of the divine nature

We **have** the promise. This is a sure thing, but it is yet to come.

One of the greatest errors in our Contemporary Western Christian culture, is the quest to have glory now. What we have now (by the grace of God), is the precious promise of Jesus,,,, And these promises **will** be. But not yet.

And a fair lump of this letter, focuses on reminding us, that the glory is yet to come (when Jesus returns). And we are to pray for this. And hope for this to be soon.

When Jesus returns in Glory, **all** of His promises will be fulfilled:

- no sickness
- no disease
- no death;
- no more temptation;
- No more sin;
- we will be totally transformed

Peter talks about how (at that time) we **may become partakers of the divine nature**

What does that mean? Well, it certainly doesn't mean that we become God. God is God – not me, and not you. Let's not 'blur the lines' between the creator and the creature...

But the precious promise is that we

- who were created in the image of God; and
- have believed in the Son of God; and
- have been filled with the Spirit of God,

will receive:

- the immortality of God; and
- incorruptibility of God; and
- divine goodness of God...

And that's what it means, to **become partakers of the divine nature...**

We become like God, like a son becomes like his father...

- Samuel's a chip off the old block
- Nathan's a chip off the old block

Sons become like their fathers; Daughters become like their mothers. And we become like our Heavenly Father.

In a way, this (participation in the Divine Nature) begins even now. This is **also** part of ‘the now’ but ‘the not yet’... We are **not yet perfected**, but God **is** transforming us, is He not??? Over the last few weeks in Galatians, we’ve been learning about:

- the Fruit of the Spirit;
- walking by the Spirit;
- keeping in step with the Spirit; and
- Last week we talked about how we are new creations.

You see, before we were saved, we were totally corrupt. Peter talks about **the corruption that is in the world** that we have escaped.

Why is the world so corrupt??? (we, as part of the world)  
Sin... Sinful desire...

This is following on nicely from our series in Galatians: The desires of the flesh are against the desires of the Spirit... And sin continues to be a problem this side of glory. So in this letter, Peter urges us to live in Godliness (we’ll get on to that next week)...

It’s all part of the now, but the not yet... We look forward to a time when sin will no longer be an issue, but that time is not yet...

But until then, we have **escaped** from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

The now, is that we **have** escaped from sinful corruption.

How have we escaped? By:

- faith in Jesus Christ;
- submitting to Him as Lord;
- knowing Him – truly knowing Him – having an intimate relationship with Him;

We've escaped by:

- the calling we have – to His glory and excellence;
- awaiting the future glory we have, at the return of Jesus Christ.

This is why Peter prays that Grace and Peace would be multiplied to us... The better we know the Lord Jesus Christ (not knowing about – the better we **know** Him), the more aware we will become, of the grace that God lavishes upon us, and the more we realise we have escaped the corruption of the world, the more we'll experience the Peace of God.

Wow,,, only 4 verses; just an introduction to the letter, and I feel like we haven't even scratched the surface...

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,  
we look forward to the day of Glory,

when Jesus will return,  
and these precious promises will be fulfilled.

Our minds can barely envisage,  
what it will be like,  
to become a partaker in the divine nature...

Lord, such grand things, for our simple minds,  
But we know it's going to be good.  
It's going to be Oh so good...

Lord, we thank You for Your righteousness.  
For the love that you have for us,  
That love which we have received,  
through Jesus Christ, giving Himself on the cross.

Lord we are truly humbled.

And Lord, as we await this glorious day,  
and Your glorious coming,  
help us to live in all Godliness.

You've told us how you have granted us all things  
needed, for a Godly life.  
Help us to honour You, as we keep in step with Your  
spirit,  
as we await the coming glory.

And Lord, help us to know You.  
That we would participate in You,  
and that Your divine nature,  
would become our nature.

And we pray for a multiplication of Your Grace and  
Peace.

In Jesus' Name,  
Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Gish, J., 2016. Peter the Apostle J. D. Barry et al., eds. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*.

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 24:11

<sup>iii</sup> John 21:15ff

<sup>iv</sup> in the Greek, the way this is written, there is only one “definite article” (equivalent “the”). Now, that mightn’t mean much to us, but it is significant. It means we’re talking about one person here, not two. If it were two, it would be “the God; the Jesus Christ”. But there’s only one, which means “the God, Jesus Christ.”...