

## **2 Peter 1 Exegetical Notes**

**1** Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

**2** Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

Peter introduces this second letter using the common format of the day. In those days, letters started out with the name of the writer, a description of the writer, and then the recipients of the letter. Peter addresses this letter to fellow-believers, and most likely this is the same group of believers as addressed in his first letter since he makes reference later on that this is his second letter to the group.

**3** According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Peter starts out this second letter with a passage that is probably of the greatest passages in the Bible regarding our spiritual resources. Today, the sufficiency of the Bible is being maligned on all sides, both within and without the Church. We are being told that in order to have an effective ministry, we need to supplement the Bible with the wisdom of men. If we do not do that, then we will be ineffective in reaching others for Christ.

Furthermore, we are being told that the Bible is not only insufficient in its ability to save the lost, but it is insufficient in its ability to transform the believer. We are told that in order to solve the really deep needs of men we need to turn to the modern experts in the soul, the psychologists. In fact, it is common in Christian counseling today to have your counselor not even refer to the Bible. They will try every theory devised by pagan men before they resort to the Bible. It is almost as though they think that the Bible is helpful only if every other avenue of help fails.

Note in this first verse that Peter states very concisely that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. He did not leave anything out. There is no truth out there that we need in order to help us face life that God did not include in the Bible but left alone for men to find later.

The sufficiency of God's resources for us are twofold. First, they give us everything we need for life. If we have problems facing life or find ourselves faced with what looks like insurmountable issues, the Bible is the answer. We do not need to look elsewhere. Secondly, the Bible gives us everything we need for godliness. The idea here is that if someone desires to be godly, the source of that godliness is the Bible. It is not possible to become sanctified by going to modern ideas of spiritual growth that find their roots in the vain philosophies of men and not the eternal and unchangeable truths of God.

Why has God given us these resources? It is to produce glory and virtue in us. We are to glorify God in the way we conduct ourselves, and we are to live lives of virtue as an example of the changing power of God and his word.

**Modern Attacks on the Sufficiency of Scripture**

**Management:** We are duped into thinking that management techniques are required to build the church. Note the new science of "Church Growth."

**Entertainment:** Churches need to use Christian "celebrities" to further the cause of the gospel. Without entertainment, the Word of God is just too boring to be accepted by the average person.

**Mysticism/Occult:** People are becoming preoccupied with the occult in order to visualize success, have miracles occur in their life, or have some wonderful spiritual experience. Peter Wagner says, "The simple gospel is no longer adequate without signs and wonders." Others are claiming authority over the devil, rebuking disease, and all other kinds of mystical healing and helping activities.

**Marriage and Family:** Many are adding things to the Scripture to deal with family problems. It is interesting that although we have the most material on the family today, we have the greatest number of problems ever recorded. The new material is not working.

**Sociology:** We need to redefine the role of women and homosexuals in the Church. The Bible needs to be reinterpreted in light of modern social theory. After all, it was written thousands of years ago during the time of man's ignorance of modern science and thought.

**Politics:** Men are leaving their pulpits in order to become political lobbyists. The cry is for a "Christian Congress" instead of the need for people to become transformed through the power of the gospel.

**Psychology:** Pastors are being told that unless they have a degree in Psychology they are incompetent to counsel. The Bible is not sufficient to help people with their problems. There is a wholesale exodus of men from the ministry back to college to get a degree in psychology so they can better help their members. There is a mentality that the Bible does not contain the necessary information to help people with deep-seated emotional and psychological problems. This ends in a psychological salvation that makes people feel good, but does little for the real problem of sin.

**4** Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Peter further states the reason for our spiritual resources, and that is that we might become partakers of the divine nature. The idea here is not that we become God, as the Word-Faith crowd would like us to believe, but that our character becomes godlike in that we escape the corruption that is in the world.

Peter's point is clear. The only way a person can ever hope to be godly is to dive deep into the Word of God. The Bible contains all that we need in order to live godly lives and to develop holy character. Without the Word, we can never hope to escape the corruption that is in the world since we do not have the wherewithall to overcome our own sinful desires and lusts.

**On Getting Behind With One's Reading**

**Junior bit the meter man,  
Junior kicked the cook,  
Junior's antisocial now,  
According to the book.**

**Junior smashed the clock and lamp,  
Junior hacked the tree,  
Destructive trends are treated,  
In chapters two and three.**

**Junior threw his milk at mom,  
Junior screamed for more,  
Notes on self assertiveness,  
Are found in chapter four.**

**Junior tossed his shoes and socks,  
Out into the rain,  
Negation that and normal,  
Disregard the stain.**

**Junior got in grandpop's room,  
Tore up his fishing line,  
That's to gain attention,  
See page eighty-nine.**

**But, grandpop grabbed his slipper,  
And yanked Junior cross his knee,  
For grandpop hadn't read a book,  
Since Eighteen Ninety Three.**

**5** And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

**6** And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

**7** And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Peter now lists the godly virtues we are to develop. These should not be seen as sequential in nature, but as parallel virtues that all need to occur at the same time. Furthermore, the development and pursuit of these virtues is not an on-again, off-again activity, but something that is to be pursued with great energy. The word for diligence, *spouday*, is the same word used in 2 Timothy 2:15 where we are told to "Study to show ourselves approved to God." *Spouday* is a word that emphasizes the labor and intense activity required to accomplish something. Our pursuit of godly virtues is a tiresome and exhausting endeavor.

What are these virtues that we are to pursue?

**Faith - *pistis***

Faith is the settled belief one has in God that what God has said, God will perform. It brings substance and solidity to those things which cannot be seen (Hebrews 11:1), and is a requirement for anyone who wishes to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

**Virtue - *aretas***

Virtue is the quality of goodness and proper conduct that should characterize one who is related to God. One who is virtuous avoids anything that would contaminate their name or demeanor. Another way to understand this word is to think of moral excellence.

**Knowledge - *gnosis***

Knowledge refers to the ability to have a right understanding of circumstances and people. It also has the idea of knowing God's word so that it may be applied in whatever situation we find ourselves.

**Temperance - *enkrateia***

The idea of temperance is that of self-control. It was a word used to describe someone who had the necessary self-discipline in order to compete in the games and win. Believers are to exhibit self-control in that they are to have themselves and their passions under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Patience - *hupomena***

Patience is the virtue exhibited by one who is suffering under adverse circumstances. It has the idea of external pressure from the environment as opposed to pressure from other people. The believer needs to be patient with life since they know that God is in control of all the circumstances they face.

**Godliness - *eusebeia***

One who is godly lives their lives in the presence of God. The believer is to be like God in the way they act in life as they are, in fact, God's representatives on earth.

**Brotherly Kindness - *philadelphia***

Brotherly kindness is the kind manner in which we are to relate to others in the body of Christ. The word itself is a compound word which means "brother-lover." If there is any character quality a believer is to exhibit, it is love for other believers.

**Charity - *agapa***

*Agapa* love is the highest and purest form of love in the Bible. It is a love which does not expect anything in return, but loves the object of its love in spite of the loveableness of the object. This love is also a self-sacrificial love, giving of itself for the welfare and benefit of others.

**8** For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why should we pursue these virtues? It is so that we would not be unfruitful in our lives. This has two ideas. The first is that one who is fruitful is one who wins others to Christ as a result of their godly character and conduct. When a person truly exhibits the godly character as defined in the preceding verses, people are drawn to the God that they represent.

Secondly, one who is fruitful exhibits godly character. Galatians 4:23-24 lists the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. Fruit is not only souls won for Christ, but godly character in the life of the believer.

**9** But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

The negative result of not pursuing these godly virtues is the loss of ones assurance of salvation. When a believer falls into a pattern of disobedience they will forget that they were once saved. This does not mean that they lose their salvation, it merely means that sin has so clouded the relationship they have with God that they no longer feel God's presence. The assurance of salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. When a believer is living in sin and thereby quenching the Holy Spirit, they will not feel God's presence and as a result doubt their salvation.

**10** Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

**11** For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

So what is a person to do? They are to pursue diligently godly virtue in their lives. By doing so, they make their calling and election sure to themselves and to those around them. Faith is not invisible, it is made visible by the godly conduct and manner of life exhibited by the one claiming faith.

Not only will the pursuit of these godly virtues minister a deep knowledge of one's relationship with God, but someday they will provide for an abundant entry into heaven. The idea here is that one who is godly will find great joy entering heaven as they have spent their life pursuing God and holiness. On the other hand, one who ignores the pursuit of godly character will be ashamed before Christ at his coming.

**12** Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

**13** Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

**14** Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

**15** Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Peter now gives the reason for his writing of this letter, and that is to remind his readers of these great truths. He further states that the believers already know these things, but he wants to remind them again of the truths of godly character and the sufficient nature of God's revelation to man.

His reason for doing this is stated as his knowledge of imminent death. Whether this means that he is getting old, or that he is on the run for his life, is a matter of speculation. There is no indication that Peter is in prison as he writes this book, so probably he was a free man. However, even if we conservatively date this book, Peter would have been in his late 60's or early 70's at the time of its writing. Thus, if for no other reason, his advanced age is a factor in his impending death.

By the way, Peter does allude to the fact that his death was to be a martyr's death. We are reminded of his discussion with John in the Gospel of John in which he asks how John would die and Christ told him that it was none of his business. He knew that he would die a martyrs death as foretold by Christ, and in fact he may have been anticipating it anytime.

**16** For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

**17** For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

**18** And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Why is it that Peter pursues a life of godliness? It is because he did not follow some cunningly devised fable by man. Rather, he followed the words of God.

Peter here alludes to the Mount of Transfiguration in which he personally heard God tell him, John, and James, to hear and follow Christ. This made a permanent impression on Peter, one which he never forgot. He did not live his life believing a lie, nor did he have the Bible only, rather he had a personal vision of God.

**19** We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Even though Peter had the wonderful vision of God on the Mount of Transfiguration, he states that there exists a more sure word of prophecy, the written Scriptures.

This is something that we should take to heart today. We hear many tell us of their visions and experiences of talking to God and getting divine revelation through visions and dreams. If Peter is telling us anything, he is telling us that the written word of God is a better and more sure word than visions. He should know, his vision was a real vision of the real God. He would rather have the Scriptures, than all the visions in the world.

**20** Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

**21** For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

This is one of the most important verses on inspiration in the Bible. It tells us that men did not concoct the words of the Bible, rather they were born along by the Holy Spirit. In fact, many times they did not have any idea what they wrote once they finished it (for example, Daniel). The word that we have today comes directly from God to us.

#### **Three Great Words**

**Revelation** - the process whereby God reveals divine truth.

**Inspiration** - the process whereby God revealed the exact words He wanted written down.

**Illumination** - the process whereby the Spirit of God takes divinely revealed truth and enables the reader to understand what it means and how it applies to his life.

#### **How Has God Revealed Himself? - Revelation**

1. God has spoken through angels - Genesis 18, 19, Matthew 28:5-7
2. God has spoken through a loud voice - Genesis 3:9-19

3. **God has spoken through a still, small voice - 1 Kings 19:11-12**
4. **God has spoken through nature - Psalm 19:1**
5. **God has spoken through the mouth of an ass - Numbers 22:28**
5. **God has spoken through dreams - Genesis 28:12, Matthew 1:20**
6. **God has spoken through visions - Genesis 46:2, 1 Chronicles 21:16**
7. **God has spoken through Christophanies - Genesis 32:24-30, Exodus 3:2**

#### **What Does It Mean? - Illumination**

1. **The reasons for illumination**
  - a. **It is necessary because of natural blindness - 1 Corinthians 2:14**
  - b. **It is necessary because of satanic blindness - 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.**
  - c. **It is necessary because of carnal blindness - 1 Corinthians 3, Hebrews 5:12-14**
2. **The results of illumination**
  - a. **Sinners are saved - Psalm 146:8, 119:130**
  - b. **Christians are strengthened - 1 Peter 2:2, Psalm 119:105**
3. **Implications of illumination**
  - a. **Some amount of sincerity is required before God illuminates men - John 4:24, Hebrews 11:6.**
  - b. **The Holy Spirit seeks the aid of others to illuminate certain men, e.g. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.**

#### **What Did God Reveal? - Inspiration**

1. **Various theories of inspiration**
  - a. **The Natural Theory - the writers of the Bible were inspired like Shakespeare.**
  - b. **The Mechanical Dictation Theory - God used the writers of the Bible like secretaries in which he audibly dictated the actual words to be written.**
  - c. **The Content (or Concept) Theory - God inspired only the ideas, not the words.**
  - d. **The Partial Theory - God only inspired certain parts of the Bible.**
  - e. **The Spiritual-Rule-Only Theory - only those parts of the Bible that refer to spiritual matters are inspired, all others are not (e.g. science, history, etc.).**

- f. The Plenary-Verbal Theory - God inspired all of the Bible (plenary), and the very words used (verbal).**
- 2. Biblical texts on inspiration - 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 1:1**
- 3. Implications of inspiration**
  - a. PV Inspiration does not mean all parts of the Bible are equally important, but only that all are equally inspired.**
  - b. PV Inspiration does not guarantee the inspiration of any modern version or ancient translation of the scriptures.**
  - c. PV inspiration does not allow for any false teaching, but it does record the lies of others, e.g. Satan to Eve.**
  - d. PV inspiration does not permit any historical, scientific, or prophetic error.**
  - e. PV inspiration does not prohibit personal research.**
  - f. PV inspiration does not deny the use of extra biblical sources, e.g. Paul in Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12.**
  - g. PV inspiration does not overwhelm the personality of the human author. Paul sounds like Paul and John like John.**
  - h. PV inspiration does not exclude the usage of pictorial or symbolic language. Scripture should be interpreted recognizing the various figures of speech.**
  - i. PV inspiration does not mean uniformity in all details of events described in the Bible, e.g. the inscription above the cross.**
  - j. PV inspiration assures us that God has accurately transmitted all that he wishes us to know.**