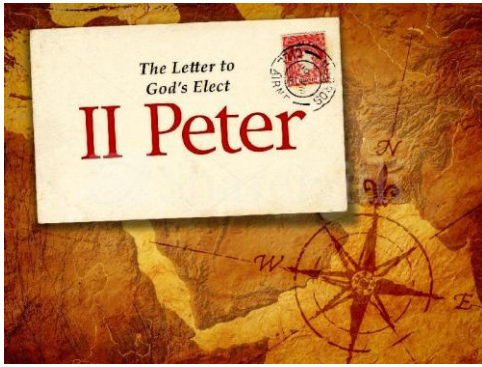


## FINAL WORDS FROM PETER: "2<sup>ND</sup> PETER"



Overview. To experience God is to understand His purpose. Because He is God and He alone, being God He naturally expects to be worshipped. Furthermore, because He is God, He is holy; therefore, His worshippers must also be holy. We are created in the image of God; however, as image-bearers, unlike animals, can choose: to worship or commit idolatry, obey or rebel, love or hate others, avoid toxicity or bathe in it.

We can choose to worship and live eternally with God, or we can choose to commit idolatry and live eternally without God. God gave us the innate desire to worship, and the ability to choose. Thus, we will worship, period; and, we will choose, period. Who and/or what we worship, and who we choose, determines where we spend eternity.

We are finite; God is not. God is infinite, we are not. Thus, God has a larger and longer perspective. In fact from before creation, Trinity desired that Their will be fulfilled—Their creation would come together in one mighty communion of souls, holy and dedicated to worship. While rejecting this inheritance has hellish consequences for all humans, God nonetheless wants no one to perish because of their innate wickedness. Thus, He has provided the only way: God Himself will impute holiness on all those who accept His offer to glorify Him forever eternally.

When people proclaim their truth is the Truth, spiritually mature people reach for their wallet. And they should. Too much has been spent on trusting naked men offering the shirt off their back. But, unless we accept there is Truth, and not just truth (what appears usefully true to me or you), there can be no rational human thought. Otherwise, we become creatures of our own myths, fables, stories, narratives, parables, experiences.

### A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:

WHY MUST OUR EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE BE REINFORCED BY EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE? AND, OUR EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE REINFORCED BY OUR EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE?

Peter offers an epistemology for the ages; to wit, he argues (verses 1-11) that *epignosis* (experiential knowledge, as opposed to *gnosis*, explicit knowledge) of the Christ is pristinely critical to faith. If we are indeed to commit to the attributes (verses 5-7) which create said *experiential* knowledge of Christ Jesus, then our *explicit* knowledge of Him MUST be reliable **and** valid:

- ✓ Reliable in the sense that our knowledge about Him is internally consistent and consistent over time. The Lord God cannot do everything; e.g., overlook wrongdoing for that is not compatible with His nature.

- ✓ Valid in the sense that our knowledge does in reality correspond to the real Jesus, not the one created by our fables, stories, and other useful narratives. Cute statuettes to the contrary, the “wise men” came not to Bethlehem, but to Nazareth.

BUT, **how** and **why** do we have confidence in the Scriptures as our ultimate *explicit* knowledge base for fully, reliably, and validly knowing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the One on whom our redemption is dependent? Peter answers the question in no uncertain terms. Defeating the gnostic leanings of his day, Peter points out that the epistemology of the faith is driven (i.e., we the trusting slaves [douloi, δούλοι]) is indeed the Scriptures—texts written by men and women not as they saw fit, but as God Himself propelled their writing ship through the seas and storms of misinformation. There is, in short, no magic philosophy. No enchanted words to be evoked when understanding Deity. Listen to the author, Holy Spirit. It is His *raison d'être* to undergird your trust in the Lord God! *Lean, learn, and love.*

In this time of turmoil between narcissist candidates whose goals seems only to win votes, and not to lead, we seek an end to it all. Perhaps a higher view will get us away from the chaos of political nonsense, and spiritual cacophony.

Peter faced similar problems in the early church.

Even with external persecution examined by what we call 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, he still faced enemies from within. And so a second letter was penned—dealing with beliefs like what our bodies do is irrelevant—after all, we’re spiritual entities anyhow. And, what about Jesus—He only appeared to be human; no Deity would ever condescend to become human with all our weaknesses and evil nature. And then there’s the knowledge that only special people with special revelation possess. We’ve gotta have it, or we’re toast, spiritually and literally.

Be careful. We laugh about “them.” But, today we are still spiritually demented. Spiritual narcissism infects the church today. For example, we insist seminary-trained people with ordination credentials convey special truths, engage in special acts, and possess special gifts. Also, we excuse our behavior with the toxicity of “spiritualism;” to wit, what I watch or do will not affect me—for I am washed by the blood of the Lamb. Or, we excuse our behavior with the toxicity of “knowledge addiction;” to wit, what I know will overcome anything I do, or fail to do, and will make Him proud on judgment day. Or, we love to be godly—when it’s convenient—we don’t even know how to spell perseverance. Or, we treat our fellow human beings with kindness, but avoid loving them. Kindness is easy. Love is hard. No wonder we’ve become spiritually demented, piously blind, and need glasses to see anything holy. We’ve forgotten our calling. Peter’s letter is not fun, but it’s a good read nonetheless. Put on your steel-toed shoes.

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:**

**WHY DO WE REJECT THE STATUS OF SLAVE, AND PREFER THE MORE POLITICALLY CORRECT LABEL OF SERVANT?**



**Spiritually Demented Work Shoes**

Peter was redeemed personally by the Lord when earlier after denying Christ three times in public, Jesus asked him on the beach three times to feed His sheep, as a response to “Do you love Me?” In what we call 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, he does indeed feed His sheep by helping them deal with the external forces persecution then, and helping us with persecution now. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, he focuses upon the internal forces which attack His sheep.

In this second letter, Peter teaches how to deal with wolves—false teachers—and diseases within the flock—evildoers from within. Peter’s purpose is three fold:

1. Stimulate Christian growth in knowledge to combat wolves and evildoers.
2. Combat false teaching, especially about the nature of the Christ as human and Deity.
3. Encourage them and us to be forever watchful, with our lamps trimmed and full of oil.

Although initially a questionable member of the canon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter has been assumed to be legitimate for about 1700 years (after Eusebius). In modern times, given the vast differences in language from 1 Peter, some have questioned its authorship. Perhaps the language skills of Silvanus, who penned 1<sup>st</sup> Peter account for the variance with 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter whose Greek is far less developed.

Most think 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter were written before 70AD, probably during the reign of Nero. Given Peter’s concern about what is now called Gnosticism, some have argued for a much later, non-canonical writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. For the record, Gnosticism has always been present in almost all religions, and across many if not most periods of history. Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Hinduism have all had varying degrees of the belief in a “special” or “secret” knowledge which only the spiritually elite have access and mastery.

There are interesting similarities between 2 Peter and Jude—see 2 Peter 2 and Jude 1:4-18. Some have suggested a common source. If there is borrowing, it may have been done to meet their respective purposes for writing. The NIV Advanced Commentary © 1996 notes:

“While many have insisted that Jude used Peter, it is more reasonable to assume that the longer letter (Peter) incorporated much of the shorter (Jude). Such borrowing is fairly common in ancient writings. For example, many believe that Paul used parts of early hymns in Phillipians 2:6-11 and 1Timothy 3:16.”

So, what do we make of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter? As noted above, the threats to His body can come from without—persecution by those who do not believe in the Deity and humanity of Christ, and false teaching by those who also do not believe in the Deity and humanity of Christ. This is what Peter faced when feeding His sheep. We too must be fed and feed. What we feed is what Peter teaches so much to us. LEAN, LEARN, LOVE.

## KEY ISSUES 2 PETER 1:1-11

2 Peter 1:1-11. *Knowledge of Him keeps us close to Him*. Simon Peter, a slave<sup>21</sup> and messenger of Christ Jesus writes to those, who through the righteousness of Jesus the Christ, who is our Savior and God, and who have received a faith equal<sup>22</sup> to His righteousness.

May the power to be righteous<sup>23</sup> and peace<sup>24</sup> be abundantly yours by means of the knowledge God and of Jesus, the Lord of us. For it is His divine power which has given us everything we need for life and godliness through knowledge of Him. He has called us by means of His glory and goodness; thus, He has committed great power so we can share<sup>25</sup> in His divine nature. We can, thereby, escape the corruption the world causes from evil cravings.

## 2 PETER 1:1-11

Simon Peter, a servant [δουλος, doulos] and apostle of Jesus [the] Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus [the] Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: <sup>2</sup>Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup>Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

<sup>5</sup>For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; <sup>6</sup>and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup>and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup>For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>But if anyone does not have them, he is forgetful and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

<sup>10</sup>Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, <sup>11</sup>and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus [the] Christ.

<sup>21</sup>The actual word is not servant, but slave. The Greek (δουλος) *doúlos* (a masculine noun of uncertain derivation) – properly, someone who belongs to another; a *bond-slave*, without *any ownership rights* of their own. Ironically, *doúlos* ("bond-slave") is used with the *highest dignity* in the NT – namely, of believers who *willingly* live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers. See <http://biblehub.com/greek/1401.htm>

<sup>22</sup>The Greek is *ισότιμον*, ehs-ah-ti-mon, 2472). Often rendered "precious," Peter is saying our faith is an equally privileged or honored faith. No other instances of this word are found in Scripture besides 2 Pet 1:1.

<sup>23</sup>Grace is not just a state, but a process of living in which Holy Spirit guides us to a closer relationship with the Lord God. Thus, grace is more than a status gained by an initial acceptance of Christ's Lordship, but our continuing, delightfully joyous struggle to know Him and the Father deeply, reverently, and as a friend (cf., John 15:14) via assistance of Holy Spirit.

<sup>24</sup>Remember there are four types of peace. Understanding the kind of peace Peter is speaking about is key; to wit,

- pax*—the Latin word designating the absence of conflict. Peace is making sure the parties do not war against each other as in "do war no more." For example, see Deuteronomy 20:12.
- ειρηνην* (ay-ray-nayn)—the Greek word for equilibrium; i.e., putting things back the way they were. Peace is reconciling two parties to a previous state of balance and harmony, as in "now you give your brother back his toy." For example, see 1 Samuel 20:42 or Matthew 5:9.
- islam*—the Arabic word for peace through submission. Peace is ensuring that all submit to the sovereign authority, as in "... a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter..." (Revelation 19:5, referring to the Christ). For example, see Judges 3:29-30 or Revelation 19:11-16
- shalom*—the Hebrew word designating a sense of holistic well-being. Peace is having everything together in its right place, both spiritual and material. Robert Browning's sarcastic comment, "God is in His heaven and all is right with the world" was used to illustrate shalom, specifically the ironic lack thereof. For example, see Leviticus 26:6

<sup>25</sup>The Greek here is *κοινωνοί*, koi-noh-noi, 2844, a partner or companion. Our relationship with the Christ gives us the ultimate source of righteousness, God Himself—Jesus the Christ.

So what? Make every effort to add goodness to your faith. Add knowledge to your goodness. Add self-control to your knowledge. Add perseverance to your self-control. Add godliness to your perseverance. And add kindness to your godliness, and finally—add love to your kindness. If you increase your possession of these attributes, then you will be inoculated against ineffectiveness and unproductive as you gain more knowledge about the Christ Jesus our Lord. Without these attributes, you're going to be spiritually nearsighted, if not blind, and demented—you've forgotten He who cleansed you of your sins and that you are have in fact been cleaned from sin.

Ergo, believers—be even more eager to make your *raison d'être* and selection by the Lord God protected. Because? If you increase your faith by adding...

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| ⌘ Goodness     | ⌘ Perseverance |
| ⌘ Knowledge    | ⌘ Godliness    |
| ⌘ Self-control | ⌘ Kindness     |
|                | ⌘ Love         |

you will *never* fail. And... Jesus the Christ will welcome you into His eternal kingdom.

—NOW THAT'S A PRIZE WORTH SEEKING!—

- Q Why would Peter call himself a “slave” of Jesus the Christ? To what extent are we slaves of Jesus?
- Q What type of peace is Peter wanting his readers to have? See footnote on “peace.”
- Q How is our faith as precious—equally honored—as Christ Jesus Himself?
- Q According to Peter here, verse 2, what is the source of the power to be righteous and reconciliation? How so?
- Q What are these “great and precious” gifts Jesus has given us? How are they accessed?
- Q What are the two purposes of these “great and precious” gifts? How do these gifts accomplish these purposes? Why does the Lord God want these purposes fulfilled?
- Q If you had to, which of the attributes listed in verses 5-7 would you leave out?
- Q What is the purpose of this constellation of attributes? How do they in actuality lead to productive and effective knowledge of Jesus the Christ?
- Q What forms of spiritual dementia and/or blindness occur when these attributes are not fertilized, watered, pruned?
- Q Why aren't more of us more consistently eager to ensure His calling and our selection by Him?
- Q To what extent have we have we become spiritually narcissistic; i.e., blind to *why* Father God sent His Son to atone for our sins (see Romans 3:25-26) and *why* He sent Holy Spirit to guide us (c.f., John 14:26)? What are some examples of our narcissistic dementia?



2 Peter 1:12-21. Remember the evidentiary basis for your knowledge. As long as I live, I will remind you of these Truths: add to your faith by **being** good, knowledgeable, self-controlled, persevering, Godly, kindly and loving. You know these truths are firmly established in the Truth you know now have.

I think it expedient to keep your memory fresh as long as this tent of my body remains. Yes, I know I will soon put my tent aside—my Lord, Jesus the Christ has made it clear to me. Make no mistake about it, I will try hard to see that after I’m gone, you will always remember.

Just remember—we didn’t follow cute, clever, created stories when we told you about Christ’s power and coming. We were there—we saw His majesty displayed in power. We saw the honor bestowed upon Him by Father God; we heard His actual voice say, “This is My Son, who I love; with Him I am well pleased.” We also heard this voice when we were with Him on at His transfiguration.

And, furthermore, we have the testimony of the prophets of old who made it even more certain. You will do well to pay attention, just like you focus upon a shining light in a dark place, waiting until tomorrow comes with a dawning day and morning star rising in your raison d’être.

Above all? Understand [γινώσκοντες, gnoskontes, 1097] no prophecy in Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. Prophecy never had its origin in the purposes of men or women, but they spoke from the Lord God as they were borne by Holy Spirit.

- Q Which of these truths (verses 5-7) are the easiest to forget? The hardest to maintain?
- Q Why did Peter want to refresh his reader’s memories of these truths?
- Q What are some clever and cute stories Peter would go ballistic about in today’s discussion of Jesus the Christ? What were some invented stories he was combating then? Gnosis leanings.
- Q Compare and contrast the two instances of Father God’s appraisal of the Son which Peter uses to validate his proclamation of the Truth? What aspects of Peter’s behavior on the mount of transfiguration could have created a “cleverly invented” story which would have denied the validity of the event?
- Q To what does Peter compare the Scriptures? How are they that? And what is revealed most often?
- Q What is the source of the power used by men and women to write the Scriptures?
- Q To what extent do you suppose he recognized he was being led by Holy Spirit to write this letter?

2 PETER 1:12-21

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

<sup>13</sup>I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, <sup>14</sup>because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus [the] Christ has made clear to me.

<sup>15</sup>And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

<sup>16</sup>We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus [the] Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup>For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” <sup>18</sup>We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

<sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.

<sup>21</sup>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.

**G**od the Father consistently proclaims His love via the resurrected Son and daily companion, Holy Spirit. His love is the ultimately profound enigma, since hell satisfies His wrath regarding our sin. This enigma has influenced theologians from Justin Martyr<sup>1</sup> to Wesley<sup>2</sup> to modern Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other individuals (e.g., John Stott<sup>3</sup>) to propose "annihilationism" as a solution to the problem: the *eternality* of hell. To wit, how could a loving God be so full of wrath? Stott summarizes well the angst behind the issue and why Christians are concerned:

"Emotionally, I find the concept [consciously aware torment] intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterising [*sic*] their feelings or cracking under the strain. But our emotions are a fluctuating, unreliable guide to truth and must not be exalted to the place of supreme authority in determining it . . . my question must be—and is—not what does my heart tell me, but what does God's word say?" [Nonetheless] "... the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment."

Conditional torment is a very useful idea, for example, for it allows liberal wings of the "emerging" and "emergent" church to "resolve" that eons-old paradox regarding God. Specifically, how could a loving God (e.g., the Creator) also be a wrathful God (e.g., Jehovah wars and/or Hell)? A new narrative has evolved to resolve the paradox—"annihilationism." Since the annihilationism construct is very *useful* theologically and psychologically, special Scriptural, logical, and sociological scrutiny should be marshaled.

Based on Scripture, it is clear Jesus preached that the punishment for evil doers will be eternal.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, His use of other language suggests annihilation.<sup>5</sup> While Grudem argues that Scripture "does indeed teach the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked," his argument is based on what he interprets as the "forcefulness of the passages."<sup>6</sup> I find his "forceful" hypothesis problematic. For example, in one instance Jesus is quoted as saying there will be "*eternal* fire" for the condemned, yet elsewhere He says we should "fear the One who can *destroy* both soul and body in hell."

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<sup>1</sup>*Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 5, says, "But I do not say, indeed, that all souls die; for that were truly a piece of good fortune to the evil. What then? The souls of the pious remain in a better place, while those of the unjust and wicked are in a worse, waiting for the time of judgment. Thus some which have appeared worthy of God never die; but others are punished so long as God wills them to exist and to be punished."

<sup>2</sup>In Wesley's sermon entitled *Free Grace* given in England in the 1740's, he said regarding hell and those predestined to it, "Accordingly, they are born for this—to be destroyed body and soul in hell."

<sup>3</sup>David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Essentials* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), 313-320.

<sup>4</sup>Matthew 18:8—"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire" or see also Matthew 25:41—"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 10:28—"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" or see also Philippians 3:19-20a—"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven . . ." or 2 Peter 3:6-7—"By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

<sup>6</sup>Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1994, page 1151.

Reliance on Scripture, when it is itself paradoxical, may be problematic. To wit, Scripture shows God, on the one hand, to be loving and merciful, yet on the other hand a purveyor of blood soaked justice (Revelation 19:13), and commander of earthly armies (Joshua 5:13-15). Similarly, God has an irrational streak, for on the one hand, He demands a holy people, a people free from sin; yet, He also provides an atoning sacrifice to make His naturally sinful people holy. If this atoning sacrifice were justifiable, then God would be rational; instead, He sacrificed Himself so that His creation can be eternally blessed with His presence. It is this latter “irrationality” that we humans love most—we call it “grace” and/or “mercy.” To expect God to be “irrationally” logical with His promise of eternal gift of mercy, but not eternal with His promise of eternal punishment—strains logical sensibilities.<sup>7</sup> I, for one, am glad that God is not “logical,” at least not by human standards.



Sociologically, we humans are not comfortable with the notion of sovereignty, and if there is one attribute of God that trumps all others, it is His sovereignty. In the western world, we historically constrained (e.g., the English) or eliminated (e.g., Americans) monarchical sovereignty—to the point that most monarchies now are figureheads with little power, much less civil sovereignty. Accordingly, we have trouble accepting sovereignty in general, and thus have difficulty understanding God’s sovereignty. So when God chooses to punish conscious individuals eternally, who are we to question God? And, similarly, if God chooses to destroy those who have suffered in hell, who are we to question God?

Theologically overall, we must remember that even an eternal hell fails to atone for our sinfulness. And, just as certainly, heaven is a far greater reward than what we sinners who are professing Christ actually deserve. God is sovereign; contrary to popular thought today, we are not.

For those of us who interpret God’s will in Scripture as: “bless ‘us’ eternally, but do not punish ‘them’ eternally,” what is our motive? Does God not have the right to punish eternally? And, for those who interpret Scripture to mean that God will punish “them” eternally and reward “us” eternally? Does God not have the right to destroy what is His? In the latter case, it appears we may want vengeance on all those who rejected Christ by insisting on “eternal” punishment rather than annihilation. To be sure, vengeance belongs to God—so does mercy. So, what is our motive as we question the eternity of hell? We humans are a curious lot.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus’ story of about the late coming workers is critical here. Compare & contrast Matthew 16:27, where variable rewards are identified to Matthew 20:1-15, where we find equal rewards for different amounts of work. The landowner in Matthew 20 it makes very clear that the money is his to do with as he sees fit. Therefore, God can choose to “destroy” by punishing eternally, or punish eternally without destroying. We humans are His to do with as **He** sees fit, period.