

SECOND PETER

Chapter 1

Greeting

1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

1:1 *Simon Peter.* Unlike his first Letter (1Pt 1:1), Peter’s second Letter introduces him with the Hbr form of Simon (TLSB)

servant. Or, “slave.” Emphasizes his belonging to Jesus, who had purchased him (1Pt 1:18–19). (TLSB)

To those.† Probably the same people as those in 1Pe 1:1. (But cf. 1:16 with 1Pe 1:12.) (CSB)

God and Savior Jesus Christ. Assumes that Jesus is both God and Savior. (CSB)

Peter does not distinguish between God and Jesus; rather, he calls Jesus both God and Savior. (TLSB)

have obtained. God in his justice (“righteousness”) imparts to people the ability to believe. (CSB)

a faith. Not here a body of truth to be believed—the faith—but the act of believing, or the God-given capacity to trust in Christ for salvation. (CSB)

Faith based on the apostolic Word is as valid as the faith of the ear- and eyewitnesses, for their faith rests in Christ’s righteousness alone. Cf Jn 20:29. (TLSB)

righteousness. Basis of “a faith of equal standing” to all who confess Christ. (TLSB)

1:2 *Grace and peace.* Common Gk greeting (“grace”) and common Hbr greeting (“peace”) are united in Christ and are given new meaning in the NT (TLSB)

knowledge of God and of Jesus. The concept of Christian knowledge is prominent in 2 Peter (see 1:3, 5, 8; 3:18). Peter was combating heretical teaching, and one of the best antidotes for heresy is the statement of true knowledge. (CSB)

Used repeatedly for our relationship to the Lord. More than intellectual apprehension, it is a godly knowing that involves fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things for the gift of eternal life in Christ. Such knowledge comes to us through God’s Word alone. This saving knowledge prepares us for a godly life on earth and for an eternity in heaven to come. (TLSB)

1:1–2 Peter greets his readers with a salutation that affirms their standing in Christ. All who confess Christ possess “a faith of equal standing.” However, our hold on faith in Christ can weaken as we are tempted into “false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.” Thanks be to God that our Lord’s grace and peace toward us is even greater than our sins, and that He is ever at work through His Word and Sacraments to strengthen our hold on faith. • O Lord Jesus, compared to the faith of the apostles. Enable me through Your Word to overcome all that seeks to weaken my faith. Amen. (TLSB)

Confirm Your Calling and Election

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

1:3–4 Long, complicated sentence illustrates the writer’s strong rhetorical style. (TLSB)

1:3 *divine power.* God the Holy Spirit works through the Word to call us to faith, giving us the knowledge that results in eternal life and that fosters our life and conduct in Christ. (TLSB)

all things that pertain to life and godliness. God has made available all that we need spiritually through our knowledge of him. If indeed 2 Peter was written to combat an incipient Gnosticism, the apostle may be insisting that the knowledge possessed by those in apostolic circles was entirely adequate to meet their spiritual needs. No secret, esoteric knowledge is necessary for salvation. (CSB)

Not everything we want but everything we need for “life and godliness.” Luther: “St. Peter does not want this divine power in us to be understood in such a way that we also have the ability to create heaven and earth and should work miracles, as God does.... No, we have divine power with us to the degree that it is useful and necessary for us.... That is, we have the kind of divine power with which we are abundantly blessed to do good and to live eternally” (AE 30:153). (TLSB)

knowledge. Knowing Christ through faith, which results in eternal life. (TLSB)

called us. Salvation is not a human decision but a divine call that comes to us through God’s Word (cf Rm 10:17). (TLSB)

glory and excellence. The excellence of God: “Glory” expresses the excellence of his being—his attributes and essence; “goodness” depicts excellence expressed in deeds—virtue in action. (CSB)

1:4 *by which.* Through God’s excellence—internal and external—he has given us great promises. Their nature is suggested in the words that follow: participation in the divine nature and escape from worldly corruption. (CSB)

very great promises. Those by which God enables us to participate in the divine nature and to escape from the corruption that is in the world. In particular, the fulfilled promise of Christ’s first coming (v 16) and the yet-to-be-fulfilled promises of Christ’s second coming (3:4, 9) and the creation of “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (3:13). (TLSB)

partakers of the divine nature. Does not indicate that Christians become divine in any sense, but only that we are indwelt by God through his Holy Spirit (see Jn 14:16–17). Our humanity and his deity, as well as the human personality and the divine, remain distinct and separate. (CSB)

Not that we become part of the Godhead, but that God indwells us through His Holy Spirit. Expression may be borrowed from popular Stoic philosophers, who emphasized the goodness of a new life. See Paul’s emphasis in Rm 6. (TLSB)

corruption ... sinful desire. Christ has set us free from corruption (moral depravity) brought about by our sinful nature and our sinful desires (cf 1Jn 2:16). “We also, in whom Christ dwells only by grace, on account of that great mystery, are ‘partakers of the divine nature’ in Christ” (FC SD VIII 34). Luther: “We shall also have all that God has, and in Him we shall have all that is necessary for us: wisdom, righteousness, strength, and life. All this we now believe. We grasp it only with our ears and have it in the Word of God. But then the Word will cease. Then our soul will open and behold and feel that all this is actually there” (AE 30:164). (TLSB)

1:5–9 The virtues that will produce a well-rounded, fruitful Christian life. (CSB)

1:5–8 Virtues presented here are the fruit that should be borne in a healthy Christian life. The qualities selected for emphasis are all in contrast to the characteristics of the false teachers, who pervert the way of truth (ch 2) and deny the heart of the Christian hope (3:3–4). (TLSB)

1:5 *make every effort.* God’s free and all-sufficient giving motivates and makes possible the wholehearted response of the believer. Cf Php 2:12–13. (TLSB)

faith. The root of the Christian life. (CSB)

Placed first because it alone produces true good works (Heb 11:6). Without faith, all works are empty. (TLSB)

1:6 *knowledge.* A knowing of God as revealed in Christ. (TLSB)

self-control. According to many of the false teachers, knowledge made self-control unnecessary; according to Peter, Christian knowledge leads to self-control. (CSB)

Controlling one’s emotions, impulses, and desires and submitting to the authority of the indwelling Christ. (TLSB)

steadfastness. Patience or perseverance in the midst of difficult circumstances.

godliness. A genuine reverence toward God that governs one’s attitude toward every aspect of life. (CSB)

The reverence, respect, and devotion owed to God and His Word, which is to be apparent in our conduct toward others. Luther: “This means that in our whole outward life, in what we do or suffer, we should conduct ourselves in such a way that we serve God and do not seek our own glory and advantage. It means that God alone must be praised by what we do and that we must act in such a way that one can see that we do everything for God’s sake” (AE 30:156–57). (TLSB)

1:7 *brotherly affection.* Warmhearted affection toward all in the family of faith. (CSB)

Kindness that is to characterize how Christians relate to one another. (TLSB)

love. The kind of outgoing, selfless attitude that leads one to sacrifice for the good of others (see note on 1Pe 4:8). (CSB)

Selfless, sacrificial giving of self for the sake of the one loved, even as God in Christ has loved us. (TLSB)

1:8 *these qualities are yours.* Peter does not mean to imply that the believer is to cultivate each listed quality in turn, one after the other until all have been perfected. Instead, they are all to be cultivated simultaneously. (CSB)

These qualities are to be ever increasing, lest we become like a branch that does not bear fruit (cf Jn 15:2) or like seed that is choked out by thorns (cf Mt 13:22). (TLSB)

are increasing. Peter has continuing spiritual growth in mind. (CSB)

keep you from being ... ineffective or unfruitful. The Christian's knowledge should affect the way he lives. It does not set him free from moral restraints, as the heretics taught (see Introduction to 1 John: Gnosticism). Rather, it produces holiness and all such virtues (cf. Col 1:9–12). (CSB)

1:9 *nearsighted that he is blind.* Since one cannot be both at the same time, Peter may have in mind a possible alternative meaning for "nearsighted," namely, "to shut the eyes." Such a person is blind because he has closed his eyes to the truth. (CSB)

Lit, "to shut the eye." Those who close their eyes to Christ and who willfully look away from practicing the qualities in vv 5–7 eventually become spiritually blind. (TLSB)

cleansed from his former sins. Such a person has forgotten that God cleansed him from sin in Baptism and gave him new life and new purpose. (TLSB)

1:10 *confirm your calling and election.* By cultivating the qualities listed in vv. 5–7, they and others can be assured that God has chosen them and called them (cf. Mt 7:20). The genuineness of their profession will be demonstrated as they express these virtues (cf. Gal 5:6; Jas 2:18). When God elects and calls, it is to obedience and holiness (1Pe 1:2; Eph 1:3–6), and these fruits confirm their divine source. (CSB)

Before the world's creation, God chose us to be His own. As believers continue diligently in the virtues described in vv 5–7, they avoid the sins and complications of life that cause idle people to stumble. (TLSB)

never fall. Those who in this way give evidence of their faith will never cease to persevere. (CSB)

Not that those who cultivate these virtues will never sin, but that they will not fall away from the path that leads to Christ's kingdom. "Peter speaks of works following the forgiveness of sins and teaches why they should be done.... Do good works in order that you may persevere in your calling, in order that you do not lose the gifts of your calling. They were given to you before, and not because of works that follow, and which now are kept through faith" (Ap XX 90). (TLSB)

1:11 *will be richly provided for you an entrance.* By producing the fruits Peter is commending to them (see vv. 5–10). (CSB)

The one whose living shows that his faith is accompanied by good works, and thus becomes strong, will have an entrance richly provided for him. (TLSB)

eternal kingdom. Eternal life (cf. Mt 25:46). (CSB)

The reign of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is eternal both in the sense that it is never ending and in that its Ruler is the Eternal One. (TLSB)

Christ's Glory and the Prophetic Word

1:12–21 Peter emphasizes the reliability of God's Word in contrast to the deceptions preached by false teachers (ch 2). God's Word is the basis of faith and fellowship for the community of believers. (TLSB)

1:12 *remind.* Peter's Letter also serves as perpetual encouragement to remain and grow in the Word of Christ, that the work of Christ may be manifested in the believer's life. (TLSB)

established in the truth that you have. Catechesis prepared them for the Christian life, in which God calls them to abide. (TLSB)

1:13 *in this body.* Lit, "in this tent." A vivid reminder of the fact that life in this world is temporary. (TLSB)

1:14 *Christ has made clear to me.* Either the revelation recorded in Jn 21:18–19 or a subsequent one. (CSB)

Peter knows that his death is close at hand. (TLSB)

1:15 *able at any time to recall these things.* An aim that was realized, whether intentionally or unintentionally, through the Gospel of Mark, which early tradition connected with Peter. (CSB)

1:3–15 Peter affirms the greatness of the Christian hope, and he encourages his readers to make their calling and election sure by giving evidence of their faith with good works. We are saved by faith alone, but faith is never alone. And yet, through sin, we often neglect and become blind to the virtues we are to practice as evidence of our faith. In spite of our many failures to bear God-pleasing fruit, our Lord strengthens us daily through Holy Baptism. • O Lord, thank You for granting us all things that pertain to life and godliness, that by Your grace there will be richly provided for us an entrance into Your eternal kingdom. Amen. (TLSB)

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son,[i] with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1:16 *cleverly invented myths.* Peter's message was based on his eyewitness account of the supernatural events that marked the life of Jesus. It was not made up of myths and imaginative stories as was the message of the heretics of 2:3. (CSB)

Peter defends himself against the false teachers' charge that he and the other apostles invented stories about Jesus' coming and the final judgment. (TLSB)

myths – *muthos* – This word stood for mythical stories about gods, the creation of the world, miraculous happenings, etc. – All attacks of Satan on the church sooner or later come around to this – an attack on the apostles and prophets of the Lord as true and authoritative sources of information about the Lord. That attack is as old as Eden: “Did God really say...?” The new breed of teachers who were demanding attention in the Asia Minor churches were disparaging the reliability of Peter, the other apostles, and the written message of the OT prophets. (PBC)

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ's transfiguration the disciples received a foretaste of what his coming will be like when he returns to establish his eternal kingdom (Mt 16:28). (CSB)

Refers to the Lord's glorious return when, with great power, He will subdue all His enemies and consummate His kingdom. (TLSB)

A better translation than “coming” is the real meaning of the word *parousia* which in the NT refers exclusively to Christ's Second Advent, when He will come “on the clouds of the sky [heaven], with power and great glory” (Mt 24:30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Peter recognized the deadly peril. They were denying the power and coming of Jesus Christ. They were leading to doubt that Jesus really does possess and exercise God's power, that He truly does enter people's lives and work on their behalf. They were leading people to think that Jesus would never come back, that they were not accountable to Him for their beliefs and lives. (Sound familiar? “You will not surely die...”) The bitter irony is that the very people who were making up cleverly invented stories (2:3) were accusing Peter of making up cleverly invented stories. As Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels rediscovered many centuries later, if you tell lies long enough and loudly enough, people will start to believe them, no matter how shocking or outrageous. (PBC)

eyewitnesses of his majesty. A reference to Christ's transfiguration (see vv. 17–18; Mt 16:28–17:8). (CSB)

Peter, along with the other apostles, was an eyewitness to Jesus, the Son of God, who came in the flesh. (TLSB)

His glorification is a surety to Christians that they some time later shall be partakers of His glory. – With these statements Peter is establishing himself as a credible, trustworthy witness, in contrast to the others who were circulating myths and fables. Peter, James, and John also fulfilled the OT requirement of having three witnesses to verify truth (Deut 17:6; 19:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Jesus' divine glory was revealed at His transfiguration, which anticipated His second coming.

1:17 *received honor and glory.* The Son received both the honor of being publicly declared the Father's Son and the glory of revealing His divine majesty on the Mount of Transfiguration. (TLSB)

the voice. That of God the Father. (TLSB)

my beloved Son – Literally, “My Son, my Beloved, is this One. It means a relationship of never abandoning Him. Jesus is my Substitute. I am not God's son as is Jesus, but God says of me, through Christ: “You are My child, My beloved.” – When the glory-cloud blazed around Jesus on the very high mountain, the Father was demonstrating His approval of His Son's person and work. He also showed that through Christ He was present on earth among His people. (PBC)

the Majestic Glory. Hbr manner of referring to God the Father indirectly; a tradition among the Jews, who tended to speak indirectly of Him. (TLSB)

1:18 *holy mountain* – It is called “holy” not because of what it was but because of what happened there.

Mount of Transfiguration. Cf Lk 9:28–32. (TLSB)

1:19–21 Peter’s message rests on two solid foundations: (1) the voice from God at the transfiguration (vv. 16–18) and (2) the still more significant testimony of Scripture (vv. 19–21). An alternative, but less probable, view is that the apostles’ testimony to the transfiguration fulfills and thus confirms the Scriptures that predicted such things. (CSB)

1:19 *prophetic word* – *prophatikon* – Peter is saying that the Scriptures are more certain than experience. The word “prophets” embraces the OT as a whole. Peter is saying that the Gospel as taught by him and his fellow apostles was not only confirmed by the testimony of God from heaven, but by all the prophecies of old.

OT Scriptures, which confirm the entire apostolic witness of Christ. Thus, Peter’s personal eyewitness account of the transfiguration is trustworthy because it rests on this authority. (TLSB)

fully confirmed. Or “very certain.” (CSB)

Bebaioteron – More firm. After seeing Christ’s majesty, the OT prophecies were surer than ever to the apostles. – When they became witnesses of His majesty, this their own experience with Christ made the entire prophetic Word more sure to them. They experienced a revelation that fulfilled and confirmed the OT prophecies of the Messiah’s glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

lamp shining in a dark place – *auchmaros* – A dry and parched, dirty, dark and murky place. Since it is a human heart it needs to be constantly enlightened. – Satan is the prince of darkness and everybody who works for him knowingly or unknowingly spreads his darkness. In Satan’s darkness some people are proud of their own goodness, hostile to the idea of needing a Savior, and satisfied that they can figure out right and wrong by themselves. (PBC)

Until the Lord returns, the prophetic Word guides and directs God’s people like a light shining in the darkness. (TLSB)

the day dawns. Day of Christ’s return. (TLSB)

morning star – The whole world may then see Him in His majesty and glory. However, this glory will then shine into the hearts of Christians so that they are glad and will lift up their hearts with joy, because their own glorification is now at hand. When one this Day has come, the prophetic Word is no longer needed. But until then Christians are to heed this word. – This comparison agrees with Psalm 119:105. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1) – God’s written Scripture will never lie; it is absolutely dependable; we can lean our lives on it. The best way for Christians to grow in their certainty of what they believe is go back to God’s written Word. (PBC)

Cf Rv 22:16. Luther: “We must have the light [of the Word] and cling to it until the Last Day. Then we shall no longer need the Word, just as artificial light is extinguished when the day dawns” (AE 30:166). Luther: “He bids us fix our eyes and keenness of mind on the Word alone, on Baptism, on the Lord’s Supper, and on absolution, and to regard everything else as darkness. I do not understand, or care about, what is done in this world by the sons of this age; for they crucify me. I cannot escape or

draw away that horrible mask which hides the face of God, but I must stay in darkness and in exceedingly dark mist until a new light shines forth” (AE 8:33). (TLSB)

1:20 Two major views of this verse are: 1. No prophecy is to be privately or independently interpreted (cf. the false teachers in 3:16). The Holy Spirit, Scripture itself and the church should be included in the interpretative process. 2. No prophecy originated through the prophet’s own interpretation (the sense of the NIV). The preceding and following contexts indicate that this view is probably to be preferred. In vv. 16–19 the subject discussed is the origin of the apostolic message. Did it come from human imaginings, or was it from God? In v. 21 again the subject is origin. No prophecy of Scripture arose from a merely human interpretation of things. This understanding of v. 20 is further supported by the explanatory “For” with which v. 21 begins. Verse 21 explains v. 20 by restating its content and then affirming God as the origin of prophecy. – No Scripture passage is to be interpreted on the basis of one’s own subjective ideas. – Man-made laws and teachings have caused tremendous damage to people’s faith and lives over the years. Human imagination is endlessly rich with self-invented notions to foist on the gullible and immature. Joseph Smith dreamed up a weird mythology in New York in the early 19th century, and the multi-million member Mormon organization of today is the result. Man-made notions such as purgatory, prayer for the saints in heaven, and legitimization of a homosexual lifestyle only lead people away from Christ. (PBC)

Biblical authors wrote not what they thought or interpreted of the times but what God inspired them to write for their time and all of time. (TLSB)

1:21 *no prophecy was ever produced by will of man* – Verse 20 and 21 seem to confirm the interpretation that Peter is pointing to Scripture as even more sure than the experiences of eyewitnesses. However, for us his eyewitness testimony is now part of that same inspired, sure Scripture. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

In contrast to false teachings (cf 2:1), genuine prophecy is never of human design, desire, or origin. (TLSB)

carried along by the Holy Spirit. In the production of Scripture both God and man were active participants. God was the source of the content of Scripture, so that what it says is what God has said. But the human author also actively spoke; he was more than a recorder. Yet what he said came from God. Although actively speaking, he was carried along by the Holy Spirit. – Prophecy did not originate with the will of man but was given to man and through men under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

The Scriptures are of divine origin as the Holy Spirit personally inspired each of the authors, in accord with their own style, to write only the words that God had given them. “They were holy, says he, since the Holy Spirit spoke through them” (SA III VIII 13). Luther: “We do not let ourselves be troubled by the blasphemies which the devil, through the mouths of his lying servants, speaks against Christ the Lord—now against His divinity, now against His humanity—and by the attacks which he then makes against Christ’s office and work. But we cling to the Scriptures of the prophets and apostles, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Their testimony about Christ is clear. He is our Brother; we are members of His body, flesh and bone of His flesh and bone” (AE 22:23). (TLSB)

The process is called inspiration; that is, the third person of the Holy Trinity makes it His task to bring information from God to a chosen human being (the prophet), moving the person to write and supervising the content so that the finished product may be called the very words of God Himself. Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16), making a wordplay on the Greek word *pneuma*, which mean both “Spirit” and “breath.” God’s breath, as though He were

speaking out loud to us, comes from each page of sacred Scripture. We can depend on it for our lives! We must pay attention to it! (PBC)

1:16–21 Peter had seen a glimpse of our Lord’s glory on the holy Mount of Transfiguration. We have the prophetic Word of God, on which the faith and hope of our Lord’s triumphant return in glory depends. By God’s grace in Christ, we are now “a holy nation, a people for His own possession” (1Pt 2:9). • O Lord, thank You for calling us out of darkness into Your marvelous light. Help us to proclaim Your excellencies through word and deed. Amen. (TLSB)