

2 Peter 1 • When Knowledge Matters

Introduction

Whereas 1 Peter is mainly focused on dealing with Satan's work personified as a dragon who comes to openly persecute believers, 2 Peter focuses on the personification of Satan as the serpent who comes to deceive believers. False teaching from within the church is actually far more dangerous than persecution from without. Historically persecution cleanses and strengthens the church; false teaching weakens the church and renders ineffectual its testimony. The only weapon to fight false teaching is the Word of God which is why Peter here emphasizes spiritual knowledge to such a great degree.

¹Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: How does Peter refer to salvation? How does it come about?

A: Salvation is a personal experience wherein one comes to **KNOW** Jesus Christ through faith.

"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

John 17:3

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Philippians 3:10

Q: Peter repeatedly refers to "knowledge" and "faith" throughout his letter. How do we know for certain that in doing so he is referring to them as being rooted in and defined by God's Word?

A: That is the meaning in v.4 of "His precious and magnificent promises".

Point: *It's never about seeking signs and wonders, but the fulfillment of God's Word.*

Q: Why should we not be surprised that Peter so strongly emphasizes God's Word?

A: It's something that was revealed early on in his own character.

Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

John 6:68

Application: *The Bible provides everything we need for life and godliness. While the writings of teachers can help us better understand the Bible, only the Bible – the very Word of God Himself – can impart life to our souls. This is why biblical "knowledge" concludes in biblical "faith".*

Q: So what's the purpose of God's Word according to v.4?

A: "So that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature".

God's Word begins to change us into the likeness and character of Christ. His Word is "incarnated:" in us.

Q: How does this become visibly evident?

A: True Christians have "escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust". In other words, they no longer live according to the desires and ways of their old life but according to God's Word and ways alone.

Point: *Those who have been truly born again are changed from the inside out. Those who merely try to live like Christ on the outside are ultimately deceived and defeated.*

Application: Knowledge is a gift that comes as part of the overall gift of salvation which is intended not just to change the information we know, but the way by which we conduct our life. How have you changed since becoming a Christian? To what things from the old life are you still clinging?

⁵Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

[Read v.5-11]

Q: What is Peter trying to convey by stating, “Now for this very reason also”?

A: Peter’s explaining what has to take place **BEYOND** new birth, that we must pursue spiritual growth. (Very much like a baby grows into a child, a child into a teen, and ultimately to adulthood.)

Q: What does “applying all diligence” mean?

A: We have to consciously apply ourselves and seek to grow. Just as the initial salvation experience is a choice we make, so the degree to which we grow into spiritual maturity is a series of personal decisions.

Q: What are the spiritual characteristics Peter lists which ought to be evident in a believer’s life?

1. “Faith” (v.5)
2. “Moral excellence” (v.5)
3. “Knowledge” (v.5)
4. “Self-control” (v.6)
5. “Perseverance” (v.5)
6. “Godliness” (v.6)
7. “Brotherly kindness” (v.7)
8. “Love” (v.7)

Q: Is Peter suggesting we add these things to our life the way one adds beads to a string, so that they’re all displayed together?

A: No, each virtue helps us develop the next one. He’s speaking about a process of building towards greater and greater qualities.

Application: If we have problems with “godliness” or “love”, for instance, it’s almost certainly true that it’s due to the fact that we’re lacking in the basic building blocks leading up to those virtues. True biblical, Christ-like love is only possible when we become like Christ Himself in putting these attributes in practice to change our own behavior.

Q: So if these qualities are more like the sections of a telescope – one leading into the other – describe how this might work overall in the believer’s life.

1. To “faith” is applied “moral excellence”. Saving faith in Christ is supposed to so change us that we become visibly different by our advertisement of a life that lives according to biblical standards.
2. To “moral excellence” is applied “knowledge”. This biblical term of when God’s knowledge is properly applied to life is “discernment”. True Christians are able to discern right from wrong.
3. To “knowledge” is applied “self-control” which leads to “perseverance”. This expressed the “staying power” of the Christian in times of trial, someone whose faith is ultimately guided by reliance more on God’s Word than earthly circumstances.
4. To “perseverance” is applied “godliness”. The word “godliness” actually means “right worship” and suggests a dependence upon God that reveals itself by a devoted life. True Christians are known for worshipping not the things of this world but of Christ.

5. To “*godliness*” is applied “*brotherly kindness*”. One of the results of “right worship” is a developing affection for the people of God. True Christians are proven by their changed relationships with others.
6. And finally to “*brotherly kindness*” is applied “*love*”. This kind of wrapper for all of these virtues is not a “gift” or supernatural attribute, but the ultimate result of a life dedicated to God’s Word and ways.

Q: What happens to those who are found lacking in these interlocking virtues?

A: V. 8 says they’re both “*useless*” and “*unfruitful*”, descriptions of people who are not actually making a contribution to the body of Christ at large, and v.9 says they’re “*blind or short-sighted*”, experiencing spiritually stunted lives because they’re still connected to their “*former sins*”.

Q: So how can we tell when a Christian is not growing according to v.8-9? (Remember, we’re not saying they’re not “saved”, but simply not growing.)

1. They are barren or idle – they will not work for Christ.
2. They are unfruitful – their meager knowledge of Christ does not produce fruit in their lives.
3. They are blind. Lacking spiritual insight, they’re spiritually “near-sighted”.
4. They have a poor memory. They’ve forgotten what God has done for them through Christ.

Q: How does Peter tie the beginning and end of this section together?

A: Just as he calls for diligence in v.5, so he again calls for it in v.10.

Q: And how does Peter define “diligence”?

A: “*Practice these things*”. (v.10)

Point: We’re not simply supposed to know about them, but to put them into practice so as to change our behavior and ways.

Q: How do we know for sure that this is all tied into the overall process of salvation?

A: Because Peter describes it in v.11 as “*the entrance into the eternal kingdom*”.

Application: Whereas knowledge is initially bestowed as a gift at the initial process of salvation, it is expected that we **GROW** in knowledge so that salvation is proved by quality of the change our life testifies to both to ourselves and others.

¹²Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. ¹³I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus

[Read v.12-21]

Q: What is the basic, overall question that Peter is actually answering in these verses?

A: He’s answering the question, “How can we be sure that this message is the true Word of God?”

Q: What is the primary example Peter uses?

A: Peter refers in v.17-18 to his experience with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Mt. 17:1-13; Lk. 9:27-36)

Q: Given that Peter is expressing that the Gospel is not a fable devised by man but the true Word of God, why is the example of the Mount of Transfiguration a very powerful representation of this fact?

1. Peter refers to the return of Christ in glory, an even foreshadowed in the

2 Peter 1 • When Knowledge Matters Page 3 of 5

Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— ¹⁸and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. ²⁰But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Tranfiguration.

2. On the Mount, Christ revealed His glory as it will be revealed when He returns to earth. Both Moses (representing those resurrected from the dead) and Elijah (representing those raptured without dying) are present. The disciples present represent the believing Jews who will see Christ’s glory when He returns.

Point: *Christ has already revealed exactly what He is going to accomplish. Our hope is based on the fact that since He has been faithful to fulfill all of His Word in the past, He will so fulfill His entire Word in the future. Peter is saying that we not only have Christ’s Transfiguration to assure us that the kingdom will come, but we also have the Word of prophecy that has been itself verified by the Transfiguration.*

Q: Although Peter knows he won’t be physically present much longer, what is significant about the fact that he calls it “my departure” in v.15?

A: The word “departure” is actually the word “exodus”, the same word used of Christ’s death. (Lk. 9:31) When Christians die it is not the end, but a triumphant exodus from this world to the next.

Q: To what does Peter compare the prophetic Word?

A: To “a lamp shining in a dark place”. (v.19)

Q: To what other light does Peter refer?

A: At Christ’s return it will not be a lamp, but “the day” and “the morning star”.

Point: *The Word of God is the only dependable light we have in this world. At His return an even greater dawning will occur, but until then we’re to depend upon the lamp of His Word as provided.*

Q: Is Peter saying in v.20-21 that we’re not allowed to interpret the Bible?

A: No, Peter is reminding us that the Word of God was first and foremost given to us to be read, obeyed, and passed on to others, and that we’re not to interpret Scripture “by itself”, apart from the rest of the Word of God or apart from the Holy Spirit who gave it. The Spirit gave the Word and the Spirit must teach us the Word.

but just as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.” For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:9-16

2 Peter 1 • When Knowledge Matters Page 4 of 5



“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 14:26

Application: *Biblical knowledge is a gift which must be put into practice not only so that spiritual growth may result, but that we will build the correct foundation for our very life based on the Word of God and none other.*