

Clive Wissmann: Christian Growth (15/2/2020)

Introduction:

Scholars suggest that the second letter of Peter was written at a time when Peter knew that he was soon to die.

Given such a context, it would be wise for us to take heed to these final, well thought through, words.

“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” 2 Peter 1:1,2

These verses answer the questions: who? and to whom? The author of this letter is Peter (Simon Bar-Jonah), the disciple of Jesus. The intended audience are those who have received the gospel.

“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.” 2 Peter 1:12-14

In these verses we find the answer to the question: why? Peter had a burden to write this message because of a message from his Saviour. The last time he'd had a personal conversation with his Lord was recorded in John 21, where, before departing, Jesus urged Peter to feed His sheep & lambs when He was gone. Now, with death at the door, Peter wants to send one final letter with this intention.

“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 2 Peter 1:16-18

Peter was an eyewitness to these events. To him, events like the life, death, resurrection, even transfiguration of Jesus were verified facts.

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:19-21

Along with my Testimony, Peter seems to be saying, there is also the certain words of prophecy!

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” 2 Peter 2:1-9

In the second chapter, Peter begins by reminding them of some of the heavy consequences that await false messengers.

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.” **2 Peter 2:19,20**

To those who have forsaken the way of truth for false theories and entangled others - serious judgment awaits.

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” For this they wilfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” **2 Peter 3:1-7**

Peter wishes to stir people up to remember the word of God that they've known.

“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” **2 Peter 3:8-10**

God, though He has promised to return, is waiting as long as He needs to in order that as many as possible can be saved from the mass destruction that will come at the end of time.

“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.” **2 Peter 3:11**

Considering that everything physical is going to be burned up, how should we think, feel and act in this present time?

It's a good question for us all to consider!

“Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.” **2 Peter 3:12-14**

One way that we should be living, Peter suggests, is with the intention of hastening the coming of Jesus. We should have diligence in seeking Christ he says.

“And consider that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.” **2 Peter 3:15**

Again, Peter reminds us that it is due to God's goodness that anyone is led to Salvation (see Romans 2:4).

“As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.” **2 Peter 3:16,17**

We should be careful not to manipulate the scriptures to say what we want them to say.

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” **2 Peter 3:18**

Peter's final exhortation is that we seek for continual growth in the Lord. This, he sees as the supreme goal that he must call for before he dies.

Christian Growth:

- Ephesians 4:13-15
- Colossians 1:9,10
- 1 Corinthians 3:1,2
- Hebrews 5:12-14; 6:1
- Matthew 5:48

These verses indicate that our goal should be growth. God wants us to move towards maturity, completeness, perfect growth.

How should we live in this present time?

"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." **2 Peter 1:3**

God has supplied all that we need in order to have the abundant life He desires.

"By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." **2 Peter 1:4**

God's word is loaded with promises that are intended to provide for us the stability and security we need to escape the corruption of this present age.

These are some of Clive's favourites (John 14:3; Hebrews 13:5).

If we do not partake of the divine nature, but become entangled in the corruptions around us we will not escape.

"For this they wilfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." **2 Peter 3:5-8**

Having escaped the corruption of the world, Peter encourages us to continue to grow up into full maturity.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." **2 Peter 3:9-11**

Take the long view. Keep eternity in the forefront of your mind - growing always toward that prize.