



## Week 7: 2 Peter

### Day 1 - 2 Peter 1:3-11

*<sup>3</sup> His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust and may become participants of the divine nature. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with excellence, and excellence with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For anyone who lacks these things is blind, suffering from eye disease, forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. <sup>11</sup> For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.*

### Understanding the Reading:

As followers of Jesus Christ, surely something ought to be different about us and the way we live. We should stand out amidst the values and standards of the world. We should be transformed. This passage offers a roadmap for this transformation, a progression of virtues that should characterize the life of every believer.

Most importantly, this transformation begins with God. God has given us everything we need to live a different life. Then Peter tells us that God has done this through Christ, who now lives in us through faith. Because of Christ, we can partake of “the divine nature” through Jesus. So, this transformation moves from God, through Christ, alive in us through faith.

That faith makes the rest of the journey – from our hearts (goodness) to our minds (knowledge) to our will (self-control) to a sustained will (endurance) to relationships with one another (mutual affection) to love that looks outward (love). Our job is to facilitate that journey all the way to every part of our lives. That looks like practicing spiritual disciplines and habits – worshiping, reading the Bible, praying, being generous with our resources, making friends, sharing our faith with others, meeting the needs of other people. As we lean more into those daily practices, we’ll find our faith deepening and moving toward perfection.

**Questions for reflection:**

1. Where did faith first take root in you? Heart? Head? Community Relationship? Way of life?
2. What is different about you because of your faith? Do you think you are becoming more like Jesus? If so, in what ways?
3. Which spiritual discipline or habit do you want to try to do more of?

**Day 2 - 2 Peter 1:12-14**

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore I intend to keep on reminding you of these things, though you know them already and are established in the truth that has come to you. <sup>13</sup> I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to refresh your memory, <sup>14</sup> since I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.*

**Understanding the Reading:**

For the most part, we don't find comedians funny because they tell us new things. We find them funny because we can so easily relate to their jokes because of our experience – we can often see ourselves in the situations they're poking fun at.

Imagine for a moment the experience of listening to a comedian. They might start a joke with a situation you've been in yourself, a frustration you've felt, or a quirk of human behavior you've observed countless times. As the joke unfolds, you find yourself laughing not just at the punchline, but at the familiarity of it all.

Similarly, Peter emphasizes the importance of reminding each other of the foundational truths of the Christian faith. He acknowledges that the folks to whom he is writing are already well-acquainted with these truths and are firmly established in the knowledge of Christ. Yet, he sees value in continually refreshing their memories, because he knows that we find strength, encouragement, and joy in the familiar. We've heard the stories of God's faithfulness, unending love, and grace countless times. Yet, just like a well-loved joke, each reminder brings a fresh wave of assurance and comfort.

Consider this the next time you find yourself in conversation with another Christian. Hopefully you'll be encouraged to share stories, scripture passages, and experiences that have shaped your faith as a way to remind that person of their own faith.

**Questions for reflection:**

1. Think of a time when a comedian made you laugh by reminding you of a familiar situation. What was it about that familiarity that brought joy?
2. What do you need to be reminded of regularly?
3. How can you incorporate the practice of reminding each other into your interactions with other Christians? What stories or verses can you share to uplift and encourage them?

**Day 3 - 2 Peter 2:1-3, 17-22**

*<sup>2</sup> But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup> Even so, many will follow their debaucheries, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned. <sup>3</sup> And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation, pronounced against them long ago, has not been idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

*17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the deepest darkness has been reserved. 18 For they speak bombastic nonsense, and with debased desires of the flesh they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, for people are slaves to whatever masters them. 20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment that was handed on to them. 22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "The dog turns back to its own vomit," and, "The sow is washed only to wallow in the mud."*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

The false teachers are ignoring Jesus' teachings – they deny final reckoning, and ignore teachings about money and sex. Peter reminds them that God can and will meet rebellion with justice. Their corrupt way of life is hurting more than just them – it leads other people to think that God doesn't care about moral decisions. They are claiming Christian freedom as a license to do whatever they want, which is an abuse of the freedom that God envisions for believers. Their promises of freedom lead only to deeper captivity.

You can likely think of false teachings that pervade our current culture:

- Prosperity Gospel teaching asserts that faith in God will result in material wealth and physical health.
- Relativism suggests that there are no absolute truths, and that morality and beliefs are subjective to each individual. It leads people to believe that "what's true for you may not be true for me."
- Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a subtle belief system that reduces God to a distant, benevolent force who exists to help people feel good about themselves and solve their problems.

As you read those, could you see how the ideologies embedded in each of them have seeped into our cultural consciousness? As a counter to that, imagine a big oak tree standing strong amidst a storm. Its branches sway in the wind, but its trunk remains unmoved. Why? Because beneath the surface, its roots run deep and are anchored firmly in the ground.

In the same way, we are called to be like that tree - rooted deeply in the unchanging truth of God. The storms of shifting ideologies and deceptive teachings swirl around us, but if we are rooted in Christ, we will stand firm.

### **Questions for reflection:**

1. What does a false teacher look like today?
2. Do you feel like you have ever been led astray either intentionally or unintentionally? How did you come to that conclusion?
3. What are some ways in which you can actively guard yourself against deception in today's world?

### **Day 4 - 2 Peter 3:1-13**

*<sup>3</sup>This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you <sup>2</sup>that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy*

*prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles. <sup>3</sup> First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts <sup>4</sup> and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" <sup>5</sup> They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, <sup>6</sup> through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup> But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.*

*<sup>8</sup> But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.*

*<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup> But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

Even just 30 years after his death, people were already wondering why Jesus had not yet returned to judge and deliver the world. The earliest Christians were sure that Jesus' return was imminent and that it would happen within their lifetime. When this seemed to not be the case, false teachers arose in an attempt to persuade the people that the prophesy of Jesus' return was never coming.

The false teachers ask: If people are dying without realizing the fulfillment of their hope... where is Jesus? Peter responds: look around, God has intervened to create the world and God can do this again. So the real question is: why is God taking so long? And Peter tells them that our sense of time is not like God's.

Verse 10 says "the heavens will pass away and the elements will be destroyed with fire." Elements is *stoicheia*, which means "heavenly bodies" or "stars" just as it does in Isaiah 34, where Peter is quoting from. This line is a metaphor about the sky being peeled back before the God who sees all. So the Day of the Lord will result in the earth and all of its works being exposed. The ultimate purpose of God's consuming justice is not to scrap the material universe, but to expose evil and injustice and remove it, so that a righteous heaven and earth can take its place.

Peter calls the reader to remain firm in the promise that is to be fulfilled. Peter reminds us that God's timing is God's own. We await the full redemption of ourselves and this world, not as those who doubt, but as those who trust in its coming completion.

### **Questions for reflection:**

1. What is one truth about Jesus that you can hold onto when doubts creep in because of the world around you?
2. Peter describes God as being patient so more people can come to God. Have you benefited from God's patience with you? In what way?
3. What mental image do you get when you read verses 12-13? What do you think this new heaven and new earth will be like?

## **Day 5 - 2 Peter 3:14-18**

*<sup>14</sup> Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish, <sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup> speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. <sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. <sup>18</sup> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

Peter ends his letter with a powerful exhortation: to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This call to growth is not just a suggestion – it is a vital aspect of being Christians.

Peter's choice of words is intentional. Growth implies a process – a continuous movement towards maturity and depth in our relationship with Christ. It's a journey marked by learning, transformation, and becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ.

Faith is always moving one way or the other. If someone isn't growing as a Christian, then they're going backward. Even attempting to be stagnant results in a failing faith because stagnation leads to death. Just as a stagnant pond becomes murky and lifeless, a stagnant faith leads to complacency, apathy, and vulnerability to temptation. It is continuous growth that keeps our faith vibrant, alive, and resilient.

As we commit to this journey of growth, we find our faith becoming a fountain of living water, refreshing not only our own souls but also those around us. We become like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in season and remaining steadfast even in times of drought (Psalm 1:3).

### **Questions for reflection:**

1. In what ways have you actively pursued growth in your relationship with Christ recently?
2. How do you recognize when your faith is becoming stagnant or complacent?
3. What practical steps can you take to intentionally grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ?

### **Video questions:**

1. Does it feel like you are a participant in the divine nature of eternal life and eternal love?
2. How do you align yourself with God so that God's grace flows through you to other people?
3. When you became a Christian, was it through your head, your heart, your will, or a community of mutual affection? Tell your group a little bit about that.
4. What is *different* in your nature because you're a Christian? How does your life look different than the rest of the world?
5. How does being in a church community help you grow in your faith? Do you feel like you're being held accountable in your faith? Why or why not?
6. What tends to win in your life: your desires for yourself or your desire to point to Jesus?
7. What is your biggest takeaway from this week?

### **Prayer requests and other notes:**