

WE
SAW
THE
LORD



*A Study in
2 Peter & 1 John*

PREFACE



Why 2 Peter and 1 John Together?

These commentaries of 2 Peter and 1 John were not joined together simply as happenstance, but for several compelling reasons. We state briefly why we think that these two canonical letters form a complementary and edifying partnership.

1. Peter and John were called simultaneously, both leaving the profession of fishing, to follow this itinerant teacher (Matt. 4:18–22; Luke 5:1–11). In the case of both, they “immediately” left the tools of their profession, and presumably their regular customers, to follow this one whom John the Baptist had announced as the “Son of God” and the “Lamb of God” (John 1:34–36).

2. They both had demonstrated ambition in their attachment to Christ. John wanted to be seated immediately near Jesus in His kingdom (Matt. 20:20–24). Peter professed the uniqueness of his loyalty to Jesus (Matt. 26:33). They were peculiarly sensitive to the great privilege of being loved by Jesus, having been called to love Him, and the puzzling prediction that one

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disciple would betray Jesus (John 13:7–9, 23–25; 21:15–17, 20–22).

3. They had gone to the tomb together (John 20:1–10). They heard the report of Mary Magdalene, immediately ran to the tomb, and at the same time saw the empty tomb and the vacant graveclothes. They together experienced the power and mystery of an empty tomb with the infallible knowledge that they had not stolen the body.

4. They both had brothers who were disciples. James, the brother of John, seems to have been prominent among the apostles early and was singled out for death by Herod (Acts 12:1). He is listed first as the son of Zebedee, and John is called “his brother” (Matt. 4:21; 17:1). Peter was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew after Andrew spent a day with Jesus (John 1:39–42). Their call from fishing to discipleship came soon after this.

5. John and Peter seem to have been early ministry partners among the apostles even as they constituted two-thirds of the inner circle of Jesus (Matt. 17:1; 26:37). They went together to the temple to pray (Acts 3:1), healed the lame man (Acts 3:3–5, 11), were imprisoned together, and together rejected the order of the Jewish leaders to preach no longer in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:3, 13, 19). They were sent together to Samaria to verify the true conversion of the Samaritans and to be present for the open manifestation of the Spirit’s work (Acts 8:14–17).

6. They were nearing the end of their earthly pilgrimage and wanted to preserve eyewitness accounts of the glory that they had seen in Christ. Both testified to firsthand sensory knowledge of Jesus as foundational to the credibility of their message about His redemptive work (2 Peter 1:16–18; 1 John

1:1–4). Their accounts reflect having heard His message and seen His glory. Both were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1).

7. They both warn us against false teachers. In their own time they saw false conversions (Acts 8:20), knew that false teachers had already come into the churches (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1), and wanted to provide both warnings and tests for the detection of false teachers, particularly their denial of apostolic truth (2 Peter 1:16, 19; 2:2; 1 John 4:1–6).

8. They were committed to the perpetuity of revelatory truth through writing. They did not want to rely on mere oral perpetuity but, as in the case of the Old Testament prophets, saw the necessity for future generations of a written witness. Their written words were words of historical, objective truth and were recorded through the Spirit’s work of revelation and inspiration (2 Peter 1:19–21; 3:1–2; 1 John 1:4; 5:13).

We pray that these comments on the witness to the truth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by Peter and John will help fulfill Peter’s apostolic admonition to avoid “the error of lawless people,” but rather to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:17–18).

2 PETER

Suffering for Righteousness' Sake



Peter showed deep love for the Christians under his apostolic care by giving them some final words concerning the holy, persevering, truth-loving character of saving faith. Knowing that he would soon die by execution (1:14; John 21:18, 19), Peter wanted these Christians to have in perpetuity a concentrated synopsis of traits of saving faith and evident perversities of infidelity (1:12). True faith adheres to the theological and moral propositions revealed to the apostles (1:16–21; 3:1, 2; 3:15, 16) while false faith rejects the apostolic revelation and revels in “destructive heresies”—even blasphemy—that promotes unrighteous sensuality (2:1–2, 10–12). The true faith emanating from the righteous character of God promotes “holiness and godliness” (3:11–13). Peter gives instruction concerning its development in Christian character (1:3–8). The adherence to holiness-promoting truth gives assurance of eternal life (1:10, 11). False teachers pursue their pleasure first and develop heretical teachings to justify their consuming pursuit (2:2, 18–19; 3:3, 4) leading to eternal destruction (2:3, 9–10, 3:7). Peter also gives a sobering reminder that God-wrought faith perseveres in truth and holiness and cannot be

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dissuaded from the power of the glory revealed in the heart when a person is brought to genuine repentance from sin and desperate trust in Christ for his righteousness (1:1, 9; 2:18–22; 3:17, 18). The impious and pleasure-driven scoffer overlooks the obvious manifestations of judgment that have punctuated history with commas, semi-colons, periods, and exclamation points of retribution on godless individuals and societies, foreshadowing a final and infinitely righteous vindication of God's just vengeance on the unrighteous and lawless (2:9; 3:3–7, 10). God, according to his eternal love for his elect (3:9), impresses their minds with truth and massages their hearts with ever-increasing waves of grace that their knowledge of Him will outweigh all the false promises of this world and point them to the true and unending pleasure of eternal life in the presence of the triune God (1:2, 11; 3:17, 18).

2 PETER 1



Living by Holy, Effectual Truth

When military troops are sent to hostile territory, they are not sent without a determination that their efforts will be successful, without sufficient supplies and power, or without a clearly stated purpose. The achievement of these goals will be accomplished by the faithful fulfillment of a number of intermittent goals along the way as the supplies and plans are implemented as they go. Called out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13), we are now living in hostile territory, but we are not without provisions or purpose. Peter knew that the time of his death was drawing near (2 Peter 1:14). As an apostle, he knew his calling was to give to the church the revelation that he had received, to make sure that they had it available to them at any time (1:15). He saw difficult times ahead, particularly in the form of challenges to the truth, both in doctrines and in morals. We have the provisions of grace and truth to equip us in "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (1:3). Peter points his readers to the power of grace, the necessity and efficacy of Scripture, the presence and deadliness of heresy, and the certainty of the glorious return of Jesus.

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The purposes and plans of men may fail through lack of sufficient foresight, lack of effective execution, or an underestimation of the extent of power that was needed. God lacks none of these. His purpose is perfect, the means He has deployed to effect it are exactly proportioned to the task, and the power involved at each stage of the plan is “according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Eph. 1:19–21).

I. Verses 1–4: God acts powerfully and aggressively in taking the initiative in salvation and sanctification and perseverance to the end.

A. Verse 1: Peter as an apostle and servant immediately appointed by Jesus Christ writes with the authority given to the apostles to warn against both false teaching and false living. This probably is written very close to the time of his death (1:12–14). Even though he has special knowledge and authority as an apostle, he writes to those whose faith is of the same quality and content as his.

1. The faith they have received or obtained is not qualitatively different from that of the apostles—“a faith of equal standing” or “equally as dear.” That which constitutes New Testament faith is the same for every believer. Peter calls their faith “of equal standing with ours” (1:1). It could be translated “of equal worth.” Faith, both in content and in heart commitment, that unites to Christ is the same in every person

and in every generation. It will remain the same until Christ returns.

2. Faith constitutes the body of revealed truth that Peter expounds and defends throughout this epistle. This is a common use in the New Testament. Paul speaks of some who swerve “from the faith” (1 Tim. 6:21) and of those who are “disqualified regarding the faith” (2 Tim. 3:8). Jude wrote of “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Jesus commended those in Pergamum who “did not deny my faith” (Rev. 2:13). Peter gives one aspect of resisting the deceit of the devil as being “firm in your faith” (1 Peter 5:9).

3. Faith also is that grace-induced submission to Christ and His righteousness that is the natural expression of having seen the glory of Christ, having tasted the goodness of God, and having been captured by the word of truth in Scripture. Thus, faith is the “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” by the physical eye but seen in the soul (Heb. 11:1). Faith occurs when the affections are wrapped around revealed truth.

4. It is natural, therefore, that the two meanings are combined, for the grace of true faith cannot thrive where the content of true faith is diminished. John wrote, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4). Here he combines the two meanings, for he immediately asks, “Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5). Paul wanted to see the Thessalonians face to face to “supply what

is lacking in [their] faith” (1 Thess. 3:10). By that, he meant they would respond to the challenges of the world more steadily and faithfully with a richer and more comprehensive grasp of the truth as it is in Jesus.



Sylvia's Comments: Peter introduces himself first as a servant or bondsman of Jesus Christ. His reason for living is to show others who Christ is. He is willingly and completely dedicated to Christ and no other. Promoting the kingdom of God as Christ proclaimed it keeps his blood pumping. As an apostle, he is also called and sent by Christ in a special sense. The reminder that he is an apostle is reaffirming that he was actually with Christ, living day to day with Him during His fleshly time on earth. As an apostle, he is set apart to share the good news of how God has opened the gates for all the nations to come in and rest from their works—to find grace and mercy. The faith that people from all the nations have is the same faith that the apostles have. It is not a secondhand faith or inferior to that of the apostles or Jewish believers. It is a uniting faith that comes to us through “the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

B. “By the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 1).

1. The syntactical emphasis determines that the words “our God and Savior Jesus Christ” all refer to the one person. Peter gives strong emphasis to the deity of our Savior Jesus Christ. If Jesus saves, then Jesus is God; Jesus saves, so Jesus is God. The eternal Son of God is of the same divine essence as the eternal Father and carries forth, by His own perfectly consonant will, the will of the Father.

2. Here Peter shows that every grace contained in the body of truth and every grace by which we are drawn to embrace it has been obtained “by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” His obedience to death as our substitute has opened the floodgates of heaven on those to whom He reconciled God. The same thought is found in Romans 8:32: “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

3. Note the strong emphasis on righteousness throughout this epistle of 2 Peter: 2:5; 2:8–9; 2:15 (“unrighteousness”), 21; 3:13.

C. Verse 2: Those blessings peculiar to redemption—grace and peace—increase in their effect and intensity as our knowledge “of God and of Jesus our Lord” increases.

1. This construction emphasizes both the Father and the Son as separate persons. It brings to view the idea of the premundane covenant of redemption that involved the Father’s sending of the Son to be the mediator of salvation.

2. The same idea informs Paul’s greeting comments to Titus (1:1–4), where Paul speaks of the “faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.” He closes his salutation to Titus with the words, “Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior” (1:4). Because of this commonly owned covenant in the triune God, Paul, in the third chapter, can call God the Father “our Savior,” (v. 4) and then proceed to give expression to

the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 5) and Jesus Christ “our Savior” (v. 6) in the merciful covenantal arrangement for redemption. It is one redemptive transaction executed in different stages by the one true God existing eternally as three persons.



Sylvia's Comments: Next he points out how this grace and peace can grow through more knowledge of God and Jesus. Through Christ, God invites us to live in His house, eat supper with Him, relax in the den with Him, go for a walk with Him, and talk about whatever we want with Him. If we get to know God better, our eyes, minds, and hearts are opened to His unlimited grace and peace that protects His people from the assaults of pride, materialism, lust, lies, and tainted truth. What more could we want? God delights in revealing His nature to us: loving, merciful, giving, unblemished, all wise, faithful—you can add to the list. His peace insulates us from the heavy artillery of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And how do we live in this spacious home of grace and peace? By knowing the Father and the Son through what the Spirit has revealed in Scripture. The Old and New Testaments point us to Christ as King and Savior. The words are the actual words of God, given to men by the Holy Spirit, to speak directly to us so we can be restored to His family. God shows us who He is and calls to us from an open door by speaking to us through the Scriptures.

D. Verse 3: “His divine power has granted to us.”
In the execution of His covenant to save, God manifests the power that is necessary to grant all things consistent with the purpose. This is not according to our power, nor is it dependent finally on our response as the final

determining cause. Our response is indeed just that—a response to the operation of His power manifested in a way consistent with the purpose of rescuing us. This rescue includes release from the condemnation, as well as the corrosive and finally destructive effects of sin. What are these?

1. All that pertains “to life and godliness.” Nothing is omitted. Christ does not become Lord in our lives subsequent to His becoming Savior. No, He brings His lordship with Him as He intercedes for those for whom He shed His blood and conquers them by His grace.

- Because of sin, we were born and walked our courses of supposed life under a sentence of death. The grace of Jesus has given a spiritual resurrection in anticipation of the eventual physical resurrection. Life means that the “life I now live in the flesh” (Gal. 2:20) manifests the hope of eternal life. The values of eternity become our guiding principles even in a fallen world.
- “Godliness” means a deep and reverent consciousness of living *coram deo*—before the face of God. Before the one to whom we owe existence, all that we have, and the assurance of eternal life, we live practicing an awareness of His presence and His holiness.

2. “Through the knowledge of him.” Because of the results, we must conclude that this is a transforming knowledge, unlike the knowledge of 2 Peter 2:20 from which false teachers decline into heresy and

immorality. It is far beyond mere cognitive acquaintance; this knowledge restructures the entire value system of life.

3. “Who called us to [or by] his own glory and excellence.” When we sinners in mind and heart see and taste spiritually the excellence of God, we are compelled to draw aside and look more intently; we are drawn by such beauty, like Moses to the burning bush. We are thus called “by” this glory. It is of such a nature that we desire for such beauty to characterize our own being, and thus we are drawn to it. The call either “to” or “by” His own glory and excellence assumes that the one called will have moral inclination toward that glory and excellence. Thus, this call witnesses to the transformed heart as necessary for the attraction of such a call. If one has no love for holiness, he will not endeavor to live a holy life. This call, therefore, comes from the choice of God. According to verse 10, one gives certainty to his election by giving evidence of his calling.



Sylvia's Comments: What a statement! “His divine power” stooped to come right alongside of us poor, powerless, broken, messed up, wrecked images of God—people who sneered and jeered through centuries at this loving, merciful God—and grants us everything anyone could ever need to truly live righteously in this darkened, sinful world. God revealed Himself to us because He wanted to. The Bible is a window into who He is. He is a glorious, virtuous, and saving God. We had to know of God’s salvation before we believed and He revealed it to us. Knowledge, faith, life, righteousness, glory, and excellence are gifts from God, or grants made for eternity.

The calling by God came through this knowing of God, and we now can live in His presence to His glory and unblemished goodness.

E. Verse 4: The divinely induced vision of His glory and excellence has granted to us promises that are “precious” and “great.” The word for “precious” is related to the word that is also used in describing the “like precious faith” or “of equal value” in verse one. The word, therefore, means “of heavenly, unchangeable, intrinsically valuable quality.” These precious promises have divine origin and divine traits. They also are “great” (*megista*), transcending all other comparatives in importance and power. The promises, in fact, consist of the grace that flows through the one by whom we have seen the divine glory and excellence. In Acts 2:33, Peter preached concerning Christ, “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”



Sylvia's Comments: The ESV uses the word *grant* to describe how God conveys things to us. “Grant” says to me that this is a more permanent ownership than “gift.” I think of a land grant, which gives legal status to ownership. It is a contract that requires a lot to break, if it could ever be broken. So God’s grant to us of precious and great promises is permanent. He directly grants us His priceless, magnificent promises out of “his own glory and excellence” (v. 3). Look all over the Bible to find them. What treasure He has stored there for us, His children according to the promise made to Abraham! (In

fact, that was a land grant and a people grant; see Gen. 12 and 15.)

1. By them—the promises—we become “partakers of the divine nature.” This reemphasizes that the promises are all the effects of the granting of a divine person. The promises that are replete throughout the Bible are granted in knowledge by revelation—both immediate and written—from the Spirit, secured to the conscience by the witness of the Spirit, and given transforming power by the indwelling of the Spirit.

2. The first mentioned (“partakers of the divine nature”) is possible on the strength of the second. “Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire,” we then, by the Spirit’s indwelling, are “transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). Inextricably connected to the finished work of redemption on the part of Christ (the glorious work of justification—2 Cor. 3:9), the Spirit executes that for which Christ died. In place of the moral contortion generated by the deconstruction of the *imago Dei*, the Spirit, in applying the work of Christ, makes, as an extension of regeneration, an imprint of the divine nature. By this we escape the work of the lusts regnant in a rebellious world.



Sylvia's Comments: And why does God do this? The promises are all designed to make us more like Christ—partakers of the divine nature. Our bodies are dying, but with Christ we are immortal. Today our minds and hearts are

confused and fickle. In eternity we will be locked in to Christ, free from stupidity and being wishy-washy. We are heirs to pure thoughts, solid love, eternal life, and clear-sighted worship. Now, because we are His treasure, He washes, polishes, and shines us to make us more like Him and less like the corrupt, sinful world. Just look at all these wonderful words Peter uses: divine power, granted, life, godliness, knowledge, promises, partakers of the divine nature, and escaped. And for now, if we want to escape the sorry, no good, ugly shenanigans of the world, we have to change our way of thinking. We do that by studying Christ to take on His redemptive nature, not by studying ourselves to see how to redeem ourselves.

II. Verses 5–11: An entrance into the heavenly kingdom is “richly provided” (v. 11). Verse 11 is a conclusion of the argument and admonition given by Peter in verses 5–10.

A. Arising from our rescue, the new place of citizenship, “the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 11), determines the character traits that mold us. “Make every effort” (v. 5)—that is, by careful and conscientious implementation of the reservoir of kingdom qualities provided by the Spirit, we “run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:1–2). Spiritual progress and restoration of the divine image does not come apart from a diligent application of revealed truth through an inwrought spiritual energy. Rebuilding the balanced contours of the divine nature involves the working out of several implanted graces.

1. Peter discloses in three categories those things that fit us for the presence of God. He had prayed that

grace and peace would be multiplied, and he now shows the spheres in which this multiplication will take place. If we were to reverse the order, we would see the connections more orderly from beginning to end. “Supplement your faith with virtue,” which implies that if one examines the essence of faith, he will find that virtue is there giving substance to the faith. This continues until we reach love and find that the entire delineation of traits assumes the prior existence of love. Faith, in this sense, is the final manifestation of a series of spiritual changes that are tied to each other and blossom in a pure and steadfast trust in the words of God and in the provision of salvation through Christ.



Sylvia's Comments: Peter has told us about what God did and is doing for us. Now he talks about our part—what God has enabled us to do. We are God's people—chosen, called, and granted life, knowledge, godliness, promises, and escape from sin's curse. The Father, by His Spirit working in us, gave us the desire to seek God and the ability to know Him through Christ. That's why we can put our focus, energy, and effort into making this faith that has been planted in us grow into a massive tree of faith that bears the fruit of virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, affection, and love. God does not say we can sit back and let these things happen, but we must make an effort now that we are able to by the Spirit. The fruit is in addition to the justification we have by faith in Christ, and the way we have of enjoying God and partaking in His nature.

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- The first three elements Peter mentions concern the spiritual aspects of our restoration to the divine image:

- Faith—spiritual change by the working of the Spirit finalizes its work in saving belief and trust in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Faith is the “assurance of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1).
- Moral excellence does not constitute saving righteousness, but serves as a foundation for observing the meritorious character and works of Christ. It is by this that Paul considered everything as loss compared to the excellency of knowing Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:8).
- Knowledge of revealed truth in heart experience settles on the conscience in setting forth both the horror of personal sin and the perfection of the works of Christ. Without revealed knowledge, there could be no foundation from which to observe a standard of moral excellence and conclude that we do not have it, but that Christ does.
- The second set of three looks to aspects of personal transformation:
 - Self-control is mentioned as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. In perseverance, the repenting sinner finds that the downward pull of indwelling sin calls for mortification of the flesh (Rom. 8:13). Peter, therefore, has reminded his readers that his call for diligence, when the product of the Spirit’s work, involves watchfulness over the corrupting tendencies of self-adulation.
 - By perseverance, Peter indicated that godliness emulates divine immutability. The character of God transcends all else in beauty and ultimate value, and

the one who has “tasted that the Lord is good” will persevere in growing up into salvation (1 Peter 2:1–3). This is not growing up into justification, but is a manifestation of the fullness of the saving process, not only from condemnation and eternal perdition, but from progressive corruption into the life that is life indeed (1 Tim. 6:17–19).

- Godliness means that our hearts have been turned to desire a greater knowledge of the God of truth, holiness, and righteousness. The Christian finds that embedded within his faith is a desire for being like God: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph. 5:1). This means to “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2).
- The final two show social and godward manifestation of internal transformation summarizing the two tables of God’s Law.
 - Brotherly kindness is the fulfilment of the second table of the Law. Within faith we find that the Spirit has awakened a love for humanity in desiring the salvation of sinners and a particular love for other bearers of faith in Christ.
 - Love is the first in the line of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, indicating its foundational relation to the other moral and spiritual qualities listed. In 1 Peter 1:8, Peter implies that love for Christ is the foundation of all rigorous efforts to know and please Him. Listed last here, Peter indicates that when we

reach the final aspect of those things that are supplied in faith, we find love.

- As the root of all, we find God's eternal love for His elect so that indeed in eternity and in the moment of conversion we are "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 1:3–4; 2:4; 3:17–19). Since eternal love is the begetter, the root of love gives rise to all the parts of true faith.
- At every level, each of these serves as an indicator that the other also is present. "You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works" (James 2:22). "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13). Peter does not produce an exhaustive list in comparison with passages such as James 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:3, and Galatians 5:22–24. Paul lists several elements of faith in its persevering power in 2 Corinthians 6:4–10, in which he also includes aspects of a tried faith that were his assigned lot as an apostle. The list in Romans 5 begins with being "justified by faith" and gathers several spiritual values that are all dependent on this reality. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:1–5).

B. If the appearance of these traits is not merely temporary, but abiding, we find several desirable consequences following. Temporary appearance is contrary to the real nature of these traits; if they are real, they cannot appear and then disappear. However, they may fluctuate

because of the nature of indwelling sin, the attacks of the world, and the subtlety of Satan. Peter had experienced this in critical situations (Matt. 16:22–23; Gal. 2:11–14), but true faith always bounds back with repentance and greater determination for faithfulness. Love never fails.



Sylvia's Comments: Keep in mind that all of the fruit hangs on the tree together. The tree is rooted in faith in Christ with the fruit nourishing us and other believers. We can go to many other Bible passages to be fed so that our fruit is mature and satisfying, but there is one quality that I believe is part of the others and makes up the tree itself: love. In 1 John 4:7–11, we learn that God is love. He doesn't just have or show love, but He is love and we learn to love through Him. John tells us how God affects us—shows love—so that we love in return. First Corinthians 13 tells us that the greatest gift is love, and Ephesians 3:17–19 describes being rooted in love and the depth and reach of God's love. In many more Bible passages, God expands on how love is shown, and the fact is that love isn't love unless it is lived.

1. In the persistence and increase of these qualities, we find clarification and verification of our knowledge of Christ. The condition that Peter states, arising from the internal nature of the components of faith listed, is their presence in an increasing way. Such a person will be neither “ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8). This knowledge informs not only the head with true facts, but also molds the air toward Christlikeness. For knowledge to be saving knowledge, this is necessary. We will visit this sobering idea in 2 Peter 2:21, where some people

turn away from their knowledge of righteousness. The final admonition of the letter reiterates this in saying, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

2. Verse 9: Should a professor of Christ lack these constituent elements of faith at any given time, he or she is in one of two conditions:

- The first possibility is spiritual blindness. He has never seen the glory and excellence of Christ. He may have heard of the attributes of God and the condescension of Christ, and he may be familiar with any number of doctrines of revealed truth about the gospel, but his eyes have not been opened to see, and thus feel, the power of such attributes in relation to his sin.
- The second possibility is that he is in a temporary state of having to squint to see the light. His former affections have rebelled against their death struggles and are exerting themselves for dominance. He has lost something of the joy of forgiven sin and freedom from its cruel clutches. Cleansing from its putrefying corruption was once a felt power, but has receded largely from consciousness. Peter described the opposite condition in 1 Peter 1:8: “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” When the warmth of such joy cools and the cleansing power of the gospel wanes in its immediate

experiential effects, the person with squinty eyes must be warned and admonished.



Sylvia's Comments: How can we make a difference in our families, communities, churches, and world? By growing in these qualities. We will be useful and fruitful as we know Christ more, and we will know Christ more as His qualities grow in us. The knowledge we have in Christ, from Christ, and of Christ circles back to our reflecting Christ in the world as the characteristics of Christ grow in our lives. Conversely, if we are not being diligent in adding to our faith, we are squinting our eyes to distort the truth or closing them completely so that we walk blindly back into sin.

3. In verse 3, Peter began by pointing to the operation of “His divine power” that granted “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” Now he returns to that thought by looking at the issues of effectual calling and election, how they are discerned, and what rewards they promise.

- Peter reemphasizes the necessity of diligence in pursuit of these qualities—“all the more diligent” (v. 10). The doctrines of God’s sovereign grace do not encourage listlessness and presumption, but they energize the soul for spiritual attainment and moral discernment.
- Election as a sovereign choice of God in the outflow of His having fore-loved particular individuals cannot be the subject of human scrutiny and immediate knowledge. Evidences, however, do follow in the train of God’s sovereign

eternal choices. We live within the framework of God's sovereign choice to create and sustain an order of temporal things that would reflect His infinite power, majesty, beauty, intelligence, goodness, and coherent purposefulness. Even so, His election contains evidences in His calling of individuals to salvation: "Those whom he predestined he also called" (Rom. 8:30). If we indeed are called "to his own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3), and this call is the source of all the component elements of faith, then we can discern election, not by peering into eternity, but by examining evidences of a call present in mind and heart. Make your calling, and thus your election, sure. "Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election" (v. 10). Peter has given a description of the spiritual qualities bound up in calling.

- This diligent labor for manifesting such attributes will find satisfaction in a walk that is sure and steady, that does not lose its way. We would not like to stumble by taking on the old ways, but should move steadily forward with increasing grace and confidence. Paul could end his course with the confidence that he had fought the good fight, finished the course, kept the faith, and had a crown of righteousness ready for him on that day. It will be the same for all who love "his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7–8).
- The steady, unflinching, ready-for-death walk here will give an abundant entrance into "the

eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). Again, to refer to Paul, this confidence reigned in his outlook so that he was ready to die so that he might finish his course with joy and faithfulness (Acts 21:13). He said with confidence that when that time would come, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18).

- Even as saving grace in this life is granted to us, so will the entrance, an abundant entrance, into the heavenly kingdom be supplied. God gives it by grace. So Paul confessed after his statement of sincere spiritual confidence: “To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim. 4:18).



Sylvia's Comments: If these qualities are growing in our lives, we can be certain that God has really saved us. We dig for God's solid treasures instead of scrambling for plastic trinkets buried in the world's sandbox. We don't let our minds wander into trivial thoughts, but we seriously track down the mind of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). One of the points here is that we have to look for these qualities, work for them, exercise our hearts, and direct our thoughts to them. We can't just watch from the couch or the porch, but we have to put our backs into it. And we have to put our minds and hearts into it, having faith that we will never fall if this is how we live.

Don't think that this effort, diligence, and practice of godliness is just for the here and now. Not only will we enter heaven based on our faith in Christ, but we will come rich and full of

grace, with eyes wide open in wonder and joy, and with mouths shouting out praise.

III. Verses 12–21: God has granted the gracious provision of revealed truth in perpetuity. Genuine faith and its development to maturity depends on the fullness of divine revelation.

When Peter writes about the light (or lamp) that shines “in a dark place” (v. 19), he urges us to pay attention that we might see and know things that can only be known by divine revelation. From the Bible’s first verse, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), to the last chapter, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates” (Rev. 22:14), the most important issues of existence have been set forth by God’s prophets and apostles. Their spoken word eventually became settled into written form. This written form became the canonical Scripture. Moses wrote the first words, and a Son of Thunder, the exiled apostle John, wrote the last words. In the purpose and by the special calling of God, these men knew that they were stewards of revelation. They knew! They knew that their ministries of the Word would be given perpetuity as authoritative revelation in Holy Scripture. That is the way God had done it, and Peter also knew. He wrote with the purpose that after his death the revealed truth that was communicated through his apostolic ministry would be preserved “until the day dawns” (v. 19).

A. Peter emphasized both the safety and necessity of repetition. Peter recognized the necessity of repetition in sealing the power of divine truth to dull minds. When he says in verse 12, “I intend always to remind you of these qualities,” Peter indicated that irrespective of the

maturity of their present knowledge, he would write to put this reminder in permanent form. He did not want to trust these truths to be mere impressions, nor did he want the impact to be isolated to those who had heard his preaching. Eternal salvation depends on hearing and believing the truth and persevering in it (1:10–11). For that reason, the witness that he bore and they heard must be given again. The strong language is used about their knowledge and the firm establishment in the truth in order to heighten the intensity of Peter’s conviction that his stewardship demanded repetition. He wanted to ensure its perpetuity.

B. Peter considered it his moral duty to stir them up by reminding them. He wrote, “I think it right” (v. 13) in order to emphasize the morally obligatory task before him. “Think.” (The NKJV translates a word that means “to account, to draw a conclusion that fully accords with a proper perception of all the facts.” The NASB used “consider” to catch the emphasis.) Peter has accounted this reminder to be right, just, and according to binding moral standards, to spend the remainder of his life assuring that his message cannot be forgotten. As long as he is in the body, his task is to “stir up” (v. 13) those under his charge by reminding them of the coming of the Lord Jesus and the eternal glory that is at stake through the faithful reception of this message. In order to bring his apostolic ministry to a faithful close, to complete with obedience the stewardship entrusted to him, he enters the stream of written prophecy.



Sylvia’s Comments: The faithful apostle of Christ speaks with fatherly firmness about his conviction and concern

for these much-loved siblings in Christ. He knows how easily we can be swayed if the truth is not etched permanently in our minds. His goal, in light of what the Lord has revealed to him about his coming death, is to document, present, teach, repeat, and aggressively preach the true gospel of Christ to them. We all need reminding and reshaping with the truth. (This can be painful if we sporadically look at the truth. That's one reason why it's important to constantly be washed by the Word, pruned by the truth, and stretched into shape).

C. In verses 14 and 15, Peter indicates something of the urgency he feels to make sure of the perpetuity of his apostolic witness even after his death. Peter knew that his death would soon come. Christ had made it clear to him in a specific way. We all should have the same urgency, however, about our calling, for all of Scripture makes it clear in a general way that none of us can boast of tomorrow (James 4:13–16). The burden of this entire passage makes it clear that Peter understood that his word was given by inspiration of God. That did not mean, however, that he did not need to give strong effort in his calling. His witness would benefit the church for centuries to come after his death, so he wrote with a sense of urgency. A clear view of divine purpose gives increased diligence. He was an eyewitness and an inspired apostle, so he wanted his readers to be able to recall this witness even when his words from mouth or pen would no longer flow.

D. Peter knew that the nature of the apostolic witness required a sensory acquaintance with the words and works of the Lord. He had said, “So one of the men who

have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:21–22). Peter was insistent on the reality of his position as a witness—his calling in light of his having seen the Lord during His earthly ministry, having seen Him after His resurrection, and having seen Him taken up in glory. Jesus had told them that they “will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The witness of the apostles was not a fabrication. It was not a matter of creatively constructed stories. They were not trying to produce morality plays or invent characters and events in order to convey moral insight and themes of hope. They had no cleverly devised agendum to begin a new religion or to co-opt the Jewish longing for the Messiah into a movement seductively contrived.



Sylvia's Comments: Myths are imaginative stories about sea monsters, strange creatures, nymphs, elves, leprechauns and fairies, and human-natured gods and goddesses. Nothing is real in the myths. They are imagination on sugar. Unfortunately, they had become the substance of belief in many parts of the world. However, Peter was there when all of the ministry of Christ took place. This was the real deal: truth in action. He and the other apostles, along with thousands of others, saw firsthand the power, majesty, glory, and confirmation of Christ's deity. Not only did he live with Christ and learn from Him, but he, James, and John were the only disciples whom Jesus took onto the mountain, who saw His radiance, saw Elijah and Moses with Him, saw God's glory surround Jesus, and heard Him speak (Mark 9:1–8). No made-up stories

or fairytales. No myths founded in deceit. No sugar-high fantasies. Only the truth, witnessed and verified.

Unlike the impotent, demanding Roman and Greek deities, Peter witnessed the potent majesty of Christ even as He lived on earth. God came to earth to give Himself for sinners, and so the door back to God was opened, and He said, *Come*.

E. Their reports came from sober observation. It is a matter of two things:

1. The first is eyewitness. Peter, with no hesitation, says, “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (v. 16). This is precisely what John, who was at the same event to which Peter is referring (see Luke 9:28–36), claimed in 1 John 1:1–3: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you.” The writer of Hebrews confirms this in Hebrews 2:1–4 in speaking of the “great salvation” that “was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard.” Note the language that Peter used to describe how impressive this event was. It was no triviality, easily mistaken. No, it was a sensibly discerned majesty, honor, glory from God, an utterance from the Majestic Glory.

2. The second was ear witness (vv. 17–18). Not only did they see the glory of Christ and the glory of the Father descend from heaven (an experience of the glory of the kingdom of God even as Jesus had promised in Luke 9:27), but they heard the voice from heaven declaring the sonship of Jesus. Jesus was the incarnate Son of God. He always existed with the Father, eternally generated by the Father, and thus of

the same essence with the Father. This heavenly confirmation gave those who observed a glimpse of the transfixing beauty, loveliness, and brightness of the kingdom of God. They were given the insight that the saints there are recognizable—Moses and Elijah—and can carry on conversation. Nothing, however, can preempt the glory of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His character (Heb. 1:3). Peter continued his insistence that his readers know that this was an audible and visible confirmation: “We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain” (v. 18). John adds “touched,” and for “seen” uses a word from which we derive “theater,” meaning “gazed upon intently” (1 John 1:1).

3. We must not forget that this witness served the purpose of something that could only come by revelation—“the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 16). John, with Peter in this external experience of seeing and hearing, also shows the revelatory aspect of those events when he wrote, “We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). That involves a revelation of propositional truth and of internal transformation.

F. Peter gives a lesson to his readers in the progress of revelation.

1. Revelation unfolds and comes to completion in the providentially controlled history of redemption. In evaluating the nature of this particular event, Peter wrote, “We have the prophetic word made more sure” (v. 19 NASB). The New King James Version and English

Standard Version settled on the word “confirmed” as fitting the meaning. As in 2 Peter 1:10, when this word is used in regard to making one’s calling and election “sure,” Peter means manifestation by clear evidence of an existing absolute. Election is an eternal certainty by the decree of God, but is evidenced as a reality in one’s life by the evidence of godliness, perseverance in faithfulness, and love. Scripture is inspired and all its prophecies concerning Christ could not fail. But how would they be made sure, put together with confirming clarity in the Messiah? One no longer has to wonder as the prophets did, according to 1 Peter 1:10–11, about the person or the time of the Christ. He was now before them with the glory around Him and the voice of the Father from heaven. This is a similar idea to that voiced by John when he wrote, “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Peter is expressing that the prophetic word has received its clear and certain fulfillment in the person of Christ.



Sylvia's Comments: Not only is Jesus not a myth, but He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Additionally, Jesus confirmed that He was the Christ through miracles, authoritative teaching, renewing the law’s focus, personal prophecies of His own death, resurrection, and ascension, and their fulfillment. Peter, James, and John were personally invited to witness Jesus’s meeting with Elijah and Moses and the shining presence of the Father. Peter tells us to gaze intently at these fulfilled prophecies and truths. He says, *Heads up! You have a lamp that dispels darkness. Take care of*

it until the darkness vanishes when Christ returns and you are completely filled with His light.

2. His present testimony clearly fulfilled what had been prophesied before.

- As Christ was the person to whom all the types, promises, and prophecies of the old covenant point and in whom they culminated, so the apostolic word is the culmination of the divine revelation. Its preservation in written form will constitute the canon and end the necessity for further revelation.
- In 1 Peter 1:24–25, Peter claimed, after citing Isaiah 40:6–8, that his preaching was the “‘word of the Lord [that] remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” Even so now, when he writes, “to which you will do well to pay attention” (v. 19), he means, “Pay attention to what I am writing to you now as the clear, unmistakable fulfillment of the foretelling of the prophets.” His testimony is the fulfillment of prophecy in Christ as reported by the apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is to that culminating word that they, and we, must pay attention.

G. Peter points to the finalization of Scripture. He looks at well-established doctrine concerning the origin of Scripture to justify his admonition to his readers. He invokes an established understanding of the origin of the

sacred writings in support of the authoritative nature of his writing to them.

1. Scripture does not arise from human investigation and interpretation of events (v. 20). Earlier, Peter had reminded his readers of this very truth regarding his writing (“we did not follow cleverly devised myths”—v. 16). In the past, the prophets spoke the word of the Lord when it came to them and then they recorded their speaking as the Holy Spirit carried them along. In that process, their speaking the audible word became *graphie*, the written word—that is, Scripture. Even so, the preaching of Peter and the other apostles became Scripture. Peter continued the parallel between the inspired truthfulness of the prophets and the same of the apostles in 2:1: “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.”

2. Paul’s argument in 2 Timothy 3:10–17 sets forth the same parallel. He reminded Timothy of “my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness” (3:10) as something that marked him off from the false teachers (3:13) and demonstrated that he had “kept the faith” (4:7). Timothy, therefore, was to continue in what he had learned because he had learned it from Paul himself (3:14), as well as from the “sacred writings” (3:15). Inspired Scripture includes the witness of Paul.

3. Peter’s confidence that his written witness held the status of Scripture warranted his admonition that they do well to take heed. Scripture, including this apostolic message about Christ, is a “lamp shining

in a dark place.” The world is dark and ignorant. The knowledge of God is repressed because men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19–20). The Scripture, opening minds and hearts to the redemptive glory of Christ as the image of the invisible God, is the light “shining in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19).

4. We are to give heed to Scripture until “the day dawns,” until Christ Himself returns. “The day” is the day of Christ. This word will be our light until the day of Christ comes in the fullness of His light. “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). In 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul expressed confidence that the deposit he had received from God would be preserved by God until the return of Christ, “until that day.”



Sylvia's Comments: Reminders are everywhere in this chapter, and Peter restates what true prophecy is. He tells us that scriptural prophecy equals truth. The prophecies are not made-up stories. God spoke truth; man wrote truth. We are to stay firm in our convictions that God breathed the Scripture by the Holy Spirit to give us a handle on who He is, who we are, and who the devil is. God's very will and character is written in the Scripture. It is not someone's fantasy to fool us.

5. That will be the time when “the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19)—our complete conformity to Christ. In Revelation 2:28, John recorded Jesus's promise to give to the faithful “the morning star”—that is, the glorious prize of His appearing for the fulfilled redemption. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus called Himself “the bright morning star.” John wrote

in 1 John 3:2, “We shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” Scripture—the complete canon of the Old and New Testaments—will show us Christ and conform us to Christ until that day when the brightness of His glory completes that process of “being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18).

H. We cannot expect the blessings of increased spiritual gifts, increased sanctification, spiritual maturity, and growth in skillful and wise stewardship of time, energy, and gifts apart from a heartfelt love for the Word.

1. Because proclamation is a God-ordained means of forming His people into a body unified in heart and mind, we cannot expect to grow in spiritual supplies apart from attention to the Word of God in preaching.

2. We also must give heed to the Word in personal study and commitment, and we cannot expect fullness of the knowledge of Christ apart from personal attention to the Word.

3. The Word of God in all its blessings in its power to shape us in Christ’s image will be void to us if we do not see Christ as its fulfillment. Not only has He fulfilled Scripture, but He will be the fulfillment of all of history when He returns in the grace of transforming glory and the wrath of the righteous judge.

4. We must not only learn the truth, but we must also love it and be on the alert against those who would pervert it either in teaching or in life.

5. Having muddled the very teachings of Jesus during His personal presence with them made Peter see the vital relevance of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost and the necessity of His works of revelation and inspiration. Without that, the accurate preservation of the truth concerning the person and work of Christ would have been doomed to the level of mythology.