

By Way of Introduction

II Peter 1:1

In our opening message on II Peter we discovered some differences between this letter and Peter's first letter to believers in Asia Minor.

The first letter was a warning about persecution that would come largely from without the church and how as Christians they should live as a witness to those who are on the outside of the church.

We then briefly discussed that in the second letter there is a warning about attacks that come from within the church by those who claim to be a believer. The warning is about those who teach error and how the Christian should prepare himself with knowledge of the truth.

Peter begins his letter with a formality – an introduction. Let's look at the opening verse: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours."

From this verse I would propose these ideas for us to ponder. As he begins some things are evident. Peter's attitude is apparent through Christ
Peter's appointment is authoritative from Christ
Peter's audience is approved by Christ

I. PETER'S ATTITUDE IS APPARENT THROUGH CHRIST

We established in our first message that in spite of higher criticism's contention that Peter is not the author, there is enough internal and external evidence to support the validity of his authorship. It's my belief that any time someone wants to question the authorship of a book in the Bible they are really attacking the authority of the Bible itself. If one book can be discredited, then the credibility of the rest of Scripture is brought into question.

Suffice it to say, Peter is the author, not because I say so, but because God's Word says so. On the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God's Word is true, because God's Word is truth. Because God's Word says it, I believe it.

Peter uses two terms to describe himself in our opening verse. While the first term describes a position, it also speaks to his attitude. Peter begins by telling us that he is a servant. I think the order is significant. He is first of all a servant of Christ.

Throughout the three year ministry of Jesus the disciples had argued about their perceived importance and position in the eternal scheme of things. They each had their reasons for believing they were the greatest and wondered who Jesus would pick.

While traveling one day to Capernaum, they fell into conversation among themselves. When they had reached their destination Jesus asked what they had been arguing about.

Webster's dictionary says that an argument is something you disagree about, something you have a quarrel or dispute over. In your oral argument you give certain facts or proof why you believe you are right. Mark 9: 34 says that they didn't answer the Lord because they were quarreling about who was the greatest. They all had their reasons why they felt they deserved the self-acclaimed title. We might say that it seems rather petty or childish.

In Luke 22:24 during the last supper, after Jesus had just washed their feet we read that "a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest."

It appears that they had an ongoing problem of the need to establish a pecking order. They were absorbed with self-promotion. Look at all I've done.

Peter had been in the mix of those discussions. He was brash and bold, hastily citing his ceaseless devotion to the Lord, willing to die for Him, yet even when warned by the Lord he stated that he would ever disavow his allegiance. Yet hours later he not only denied the Lord, he also deserted Him bitterly torn by the apparent ease in which he succumbed to the temptation to repudiate his association with Jesus.

Gripped with remorse, he ran out and wept bitterly. I believe they were genuine tears of repentance. Later on, compelled by Christ's love for him and His love for Christ, he allowed the Lord to cut away the sin of pride by using the scalpel of forgiveness and love. He had a drastic change in attitude. Writing to these believers about three decades later, Peter had a different view of himself. He was no longer the self-assertive opportunist vying for prominence. He was a servant.

I'm sure he thought he was a servant before the cross because of all the things he did for the Lord during those ministry years. It was more about action, perhaps bordering on a bit of Phariseeism than it was about attitude. Since the failure before the cross and his encounter with the Lord after the cross he was a changed man with a changed attitude. As a servant he was driven by an inner motivation that was truly bred from a sincere heart of devotion.

The word Peter uses here refers to someone who is a slave. It's not very PC today to say it that way. But that's what he was. It's the same word used in Deuteronomy 15:16-17.

“But if your servant says to you, ‘I do not want to leave you,’ because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same with your maidservant.”

Every 7 years anyone who had become a servant during that time frame was to be set free. Notice that the servant was given an option. He could choose his freedom or he could choose to remain as a servant for the rest of his life. The act was strictly voluntary not compulsory. They would go to the doorpost and with an awl the master would pierce the earlobe as an indication to everyone else that this person was voluntarily submitting to this owner for life. He willingly surrendered all his rights in order to submit to the will of this owner.

The word *doulos* used here by Peter stresses the slave's complete dependence on the master.

That's the picture Peter wants to convey as he writes to these believers. First and foremost he belonged to Christ voluntarily, humbly submitting to Him, giving the Lord everything to serve Him. He was indicating that as a slave of the Lord owned. As a Jesus follower we belong to Christ and if we are to take the attitude of Peter we need to voluntarily submit our will to His, putting any personal ambition aside to do the will of Christ.

That's not a popular practice in today's 'take charge of your own life' culture that we live in.

Jesus taught that a slave is not above his master. Before Peter's fireside failure there were a number of instances where Peter tried to override the Lord. After Christ's resurrection Peter was a changed man from the inside out and he had learned the valuable lesson of humility with its resulting attitude of servanthood. It's what Jesus tried to teach them in the upper room when he washed the feet of the disciples when they were too busy arguing about who was greatest. They were like squabbling siblings arguing over who would get the biggest piece of cake. Being a servant is never about me, it's always about the Master.

Peter was expressing to these believers that everything about him belonged to the Lord.

It was a deliberate attitude.
 It was a daily attitude.
 It was a decisive attitude.

Like Peter can you say you have a servant's attitude? That was foremost on his mind, preeminent in his designation of himself.

We see next that Peter's appointment is authoritative from Christ.

II. PETER'S APPOINTMENT IS AUTHORITATIVE FROM CHRIST

There was a time when titles, degrees and awards would have been important to Peter. If the disciples would have had a sash on which to display badges for awards he would have worn his proudly.

The badge for walking on water

The badge for correctly identifying Christ

The badge for food distribution

The badge for a mountain top experience

The badge for miracles

The badge for preaching

The badge for fishing

The badge for discipleship

Peter was one of the first to be called by Jesus to follow Him. He was with Jesus from the beginning and when Christ ascended into heaven recorded for us in Acts 1 we see Peter in the group who received the instruction to continue the work of spreading the gospel. He along with the other ten and then the addition of Matthias were the apostles, the ones whose names will appear on the 12 foundations of the New Jerusalem.

Jesus said in Matthew 28 that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him and He was in turn extending that authority to the disciples to go make other disciples, to perpetuate the church. They were selected as apostles

The general definition for the word apostle means to

send forth as a delegate, someone sent with a special message or commission.

The term can be generally applied to individuals outside the number of the 12 who were going out on behalf of someone else, the emphasis being on the sender with the sent one being the representative.

For example in Genesis 45:8 we have Joseph saying that he was a messenger sent by God to Egypt to prepare the way for the arrival of the rest of the family to endure the famine.

“So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.”

In I Kings 14:6 Ahijah the prophet was sent by God with a message for the wife of King Jeroboam that their son would not survive.

We find the broad term used in John 13:16 where Jesus says that a messenger (apostolos) is not greater than the one who sent him.

Paul uses the word in II Corinthians 8:23 to refer to those sent with Titus to Corinth as representatives.

In Philippians 2:25 Epaphroditus is described as a messenger.

These all use the broad sense of the term apostle. They were someone who was given a message to deliver.

Peter, though, is referring to himself in the narrow sense of the word in which it is meant that he was given this commission and message directly from the Lord, who is THE apostle and priest.

Hebrews 3:1-6

In this passage we see that Christ is the one who was sent by God to reveal Him to mankind.

John 1:18 “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.”

We learn in verses 1 and 14 that the One and Only is the Word, Jesus Christ.

In I John 4:14 we read that God sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. We could say based on the definition that Jesus was commissioned by God the Father with a specific message.

John in his gospel uses the verb form of apostle to describe the actions or functions of Jesus as The Apostle of God.

He was sent by God – John 7:28-29; 8:42

He spoke the words of God – John 3:34

He did God’s works – John 5:36; 6:29

He did God’s will – John 6:38

He revealed God – John 5:37-47

He came to give eternal life – John 17:18-26

Everything then that an apostle does centers in God through Christ.

Matthew 10:2 describes the 12 as apostles sent on their missionary journey referring to their function not their status or position.

Luke almost exclusively uses the term apostle when speaking of the 12. They had both a special message and a commission.

Peter is speaking to his position here not to the functions of the office. He wants them to also know that he has the authority to write to them. What he will write comes with a certain measure of influence to provide direction for godly living.

Peter had the credentials necessary for being an apostle, credentials that came from the commission of the Lord. Like Paul, he could say that this position didn’t come from man nor by man, but by Jesus Christ who had given him this authority.

Peter was a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. That shows us who his master was and where his authority to write them came from.

Peter’s letter comes with some teeth. And while he refers to himself as an apostle second, he does so in order not to flaunt his position. If you will remember our study in I Peter, he taught that a leader was not to lord it over those under him and Peter wants to follow his own advice. What he writes stems from the authority he had from Christ to whom he was a servant. As a representative of Christ, his words come from Christ.

Whether then or now, what Peter has to say is important for us to heed especially in a day when doctrinal error is becoming more prevalent in the church.

He concludes with identifying his audience. Peter’s audience is approved by Christ.

III. PETER’S AUDIENCE IS APPROVED BY CHRIST

“To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.”

We talked in our first letter that while not specifically mentioned in this letter, Peter says later on that this is the second letter he has written to them. So we can be fairly certain that he is writing again to the churches in Asia Minor. But one thing we can be certain of from this verse even though it may be unclear where this letter went we know that whoever they are, they were believers. They had received faith through the righteousness of Christ. Let’s consider first of all their righteousness.

A. Their Righteousness

A simple definition for the term righteousness from *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament*

Words states that it is “the character or quality of being right or just.”

We learn from Isaiah 53:6 that we have all gone astray.

Romans 3:23 says that we have all sinned.

Romans 3:10 says that no one is righteous. Verse 12 goes on to say that we have all turned away, we are altogether worthless and there is not even one person who does good. We are all under sin. In ourselves we have no spiritual capacity, there are no exceptions.

That’s a rotten condition to be in. So where does their righteousness come from? Peter explains. It comes through “the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Peter brings up a very important doctrine here, the deity of Christ by referring to Him as God.

John 1:1, 14 are the essential verses that help us see that Jesus was not merely a man, but that He was in fact God incarnate, God in the flesh.

Peter affirms the deity of Christ

When Thomas saw the resurrected Christ he affirmed His deity when he exclaimed “My Lord and my God.” John 20:28

Titus 2:13 “While we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

In Romans 9:5 Paul describes Christ as being God over everything.

Jesus referred to Himself as “I am”, looking back to the conversation God had with Moses at the burning bush.

In John 10:30 He said that He was one with the Father.

Charles Ryrie provides Biblical support for the deity of Christ.

Christ possesses attributes only God has

John 8:58; 17:5 – He claimed eternal existence
Matthew 18:20; 28:20 – He claimed omnipresence
Matthew 16:21; John 4:29 – He claimed omniscience

Matthew 28:18; John 11:38-44 – He claimed omnipotence

Christ performs works only God can do.

Mark 2:1-12 – He forgives

John 5:21 – He gives spiritual life

John 11:43 – He will raise the dead

John 5:22, 27 – He will judge all people

These passages are just some of the evidence to substantiate that Jesus is deity. As such and because He is God, He is sinless.

I Peter 1:18-19, 22

In John 15:10 Jesus stated that He kept all the Father’s commandments.

In II Corinthians 5:21 Paul writes that “He knew no sin.”

I John 3:5 says that in Christ there was no sin.

Hebrews 4:15 Jesus was without sin.

Hebrews 7:26 Jesus was holy, innocent, and undefiled.

Hebrews 7:27 Jesus had no need for of offering sacrifices for Himself.

That Jesus Christ is righteous is essential to our own righteousness. Without His righteousness being imputed to us, we can never see God.

Lewis Sperry Chafer in his Systematic Theology explains it this way: Righteousness “is that which the believer becomes in virtue of his being in Christ. Jesus Christ represents the righteousness of God, and the believer becomes what Christ is at the moment of believing.”

Imputation simply means attributing to another. In this case when we by faith believe in Christ His righteousness is then attributed or credited to us. Genesis 15:6 (Romans 4:20-24)

Romans 8:4 supports this by indicating that this righteousness is not anything that we have done or can do, but solely by the work of the Holy Spirit. As Chafer explains, righteousness is not produced by us, but in us.

This righteousness Peter explains was provided to them Jesus Christ who is God.

Notice too, that Peter makes it both personal and mutual when he refers to Him as “OUR God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Emphasis added.)

The last thing I want to point out from this verse is their reassurance.

B. Their Reassurance

“To those who...have received a faith as precious as ours.”

What he writes here is also spoken in humility. Their faith was not in any way inferior to his or that of the other apostles. It was the same. They were all on the same spiritual plane. Peter had learned a valuable lesson from Jesus. We read about it in Luke 10:19-20 “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

You may think that your status or power or authority to perform miracles is a great thing, but Jesus says, don’t rejoice in that. Instead, rejoice that your names are written down in heaven. In other words, be glad for your faith. Be glad about your eternal security.

John Piper writes “No matter how much authority a believer is given by Christ, he should never forget that the great joy of his life should simply be that he is saved by faith like all the other

saints.”

Their faith was of equal standing in God’s sight as that of the apostles.

Peter uses a term that was used to describe a foreigner who had been granted the same privileges of a natural born citizen. This was different than what pre-Gnosticism taught. They taught that only a privileged few would receive special knowledge. Peter says that’s not so. The faith of one for salvation is the same as the faith of another. This faith is given on the basis of the righteousness of our God and Savior. Even though he was an apostle his faith wasn’t any different or better than others.

Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9 that like grace, faith is also a gift of God for salvation. Without His grace we cannot be saved. Without faith we cannot be saved. Both come from God.

Romans 1:17 “the righteous will live by faith.” Romans 3:22 “The righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” Paul goes on to say that if we are all sinners then we are all justified by God’s grace through the redemption that comes by Jesus Christ through faith.

Because it is His righteousness and not ours, there is nothing in which we can boast and it then becomes all the more precious to us.

John Phillips in his commentary adds that “it is precious because it brings into our lives all of God’s inexhaustible riches of saving, securing, and sanctifying grace.”

When we get to verse 4 we will talk a bit more about all those precious promises that are ours because of faith.

Precious is a word that is peculiar to Peter, a word he uses 7 times in both letters.

It should invoke in us a greater sense of just how special this righteousness is that we have been given by faith because we are in Christ. It should instill in us a desire to live right because that is how God sees us.

Because of their faith they were approved to receive the righteousness of Christ.

Let me close by asking you some simple questions. Do you see yourself as a servant of Jesus Christ, submitting to His will?

Do you see yourself as someone commissioned by Jesus Christ taking His message of salvation to others?

Do you see yourself through the righteousness of Christ by a precious faith?

By way of introduction Peter sets us up for the rest of the letter that in order to help us stand firm in our faith so that we won't be led astray by the doctrinal error of false teachers.