

2 Peter 1:1-3 – Introduction to 2 Peter

1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: 2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Here near the lake, we know about fishermen. Peter was a fisherman. He fished on lake Galilee, often at night. One day he met Jesus, and believed in him. One day later on, Jesus called him to leave his fishing, and be with him. He taught him and made him an apostle. After that came many sufferings, many trials, and blessings. Now he was coming near the end of his life (1:14). He wanted to make sure the church was ready for the departing of the apostles. In 1 Peter, he had taught them how to live with suffering caused by outsiders. Now he taught them about dangers inside the church. False teachers and ungodly living were problems then, and today. In this letter, Peter teaches us how to be safe against their attacks.

1. Who wrote – Simon Peter, servant and apostle (v1)

Simon was always ready to follow Jesus. Often he made mistakes. He trusted too much in himself. He expected victories to come too quickly and easily. He did not understand the cost of discipleship, or the way of the cross. He did not know his own weakness. But, he always knew he should stay close to Jesus. He did not want to go anywhere else (John 6:67-68). Later, he preached on the day of Pentecost when the church began (Acts 2). He preached again when the first non-Jew joined the church (Acts 10). He continued to make mistakes, and one time Paul had to rebuke him, when he stopped having fellowship with non-Jews (Galatians 2:11-14). Later, Peter called Paul his “beloved brother” (2 Peter 3:15). Peter was always learning – and he was always faithful to Jesus, even when he made mistakes. Now, as he wrote, he was an old man, and ready soon to die (1:14). He now tells us what Jesus had showed him, through all that time.

First, he introduced himself as a “servant” (v1). He led the apostles, but he was not proud. All true Christians and leaders are servants of Jesus and of their people. They are not looking for their crowns now – those will come later, when Jesus takes us out of this life. The greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves most (Luke 9:48). Jesus himself came to serve us and die for us, and show us an example (Philippians 2:5-8). Are you a servant? Jesus was a servant, and Peter was a servant – we must be too. He wrote this letter to help us; we should be ready to listen to it.

Secondly, Peter introduced himself as an “apostle”. An apostle is somebody who is sent with authority. He comes and acts and speaks in the name of the one sending him. Peter wrote this letter, but he wrote guided by the Spirit of God. He was not giving his own ideas or wisdom. He was giving us the mind of Christ. He knew the truth, because Jesus had told him – and he now gives it to us. In this letter he wrote the absolute truth; we must submit to it, believe it and obey it.

2. Who he wrote to – what a Christian is (v1)

Peter was not writing to Christians in just one place, but in many places. He had written before (3:1) – and that letter was for all of “Asia Minor” (1 Peter 1:1), part of the Roman Empire, which today is Turkey. His teaching is suitable for Christians in every place. But Peter did not say “Christians” - instead, he described what a Christian really is. What did he say? A Christian is someone with faith. “Faith” means that we believe the words and promises of the gospel. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came from heaven to die for our sins, and who rose from the dead to be Lord of the world. We have not seen these things, but we have heard, and we believe. All our hope for forgiveness and eternal life is in Jesus, his death and resurrection. Faith is “precious”, or valuable. It is worth more than millions of shillings – because without faith we cannot be saved, but must perish. Many people go to church, but few will actually live lives that show that they believe God's words. Faith is a gift – it comes from God. It does not come from our own power or strength, but is given from heaven. God changes our hearts, opens our eyes, and shows us the glory of Jesus by the Spirit. It is a gift from our righteous God and Saviour, Jesus. How can God be just or right to not punish our sins? Because he punished them already when Jesus died. The price was fully paid. God did not ignore sin, but instead he dealt with it at the cross. Now he is righteous to deliver his people. All salvation is from God, alone – from “our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ”. Jesus is God; the Son has the full glory of the Father, and shows us exactly what he is like.

3. Why he wrote – our calling to know God (v2-3)

In those days, letters began with the name of the writer (Simon Peter), then who was being written to (Christians) – then a greeting. Greeks would say “Grace!” and Jews would say “Peace!”, but Christians said both; and they meant them! Grace is God's favour and kindness. He wants us to know that he wishes his people good. We have peace through the death of Jesus – God's anger has been taken away, and we can fellowship with him. Peter wished us these in great measure. How can we get them? Through getting to know God better. Peter writes a lot about the “knowledge” of God (1:3 & 8, 2:20, 3:18). He means much more than knowing teachings. It goes far beyond the head. The devil has more knowledge of that kind than us! It is to know God and be known by him in a personal relationship. It is to know him as our Father, our friend and love. It is to know and enjoy him as he really is. In salvation, we get to know God. This is the way to grow in peace and grace: to know him better. He has equipped us with all that we need to have eternal life and to be godly in this way. There is no great hidden secret in growing as a Christian. We must study to learn what he is like, and what pleases him, and seek to do it. He will help us in this. Notice that Peter teaches us that God saved us so that we can live godly lives. Godliness is our goal – not riches, or an easy life, or worldly victories, but to please him and be like him. This is why Peter wrote – so that we could get nearer to God. It is not impossible. Are these the things you desire too?