

Lesson Seven — A Blueprint for Growth, Part I

Day One — A Review of the Historical Setting

Day Two — An Overview of II Peter

Day Three — Glimpsing Jude

Day Four — The Knowledge

Day Five — Everything Pertaining to Life and Godliness

Having completed our study in I Peter we now move into II Peter. While I Peter deals with faith in relation to its goal — the salvation of the soul, and suffering toward that goal, II Peter deals with apostasy from the faith as it relates to the salvation of the soul, and the work of false teachers in relation to this apostasy. And while the two books may be studied separately, it is helpful (and interesting) to see the way the two relate in the life of a Christian today. Suffering is the lot of any and all Christians. Though we don't like it and often ask God to release us from it, suffering should be looked upon as the norm for Christians, therefore, we are "not to be surprised." I Peter tells us how we are to respond to suffering.

But the work of false teachers in this respect is the lot of Christians — both then and there, and here and now. And after Peter tells his recipients how to handle suffering, about a year or two later, he moves into the area of false teachers, and speaks of their origin and their destruction.

Day One — A Review of the Historical Setting

As always, when we come to an epistle, it is important to remember the historical setting. The historical setting helps us determine what was the author's intent in his writing. We studied the historical setting for the first letter of Peter, now we will review it for the second letter. Keep in mind, about one to two years have past since Peter sent his first letter. Go back to Lesson Two in your workbook and review Days One and Two. That is all you will be doing today, so take your time to do your review thoroughly.

Day Two — An Overview of II Peter

II Peter and Jude are companion epistles, covering the same topic only with differing emphasis — both have to do with apostasy from *the faith*. Today and tomorrow we will be observing these two epistles. Pray that the Holy Spirit will teach you and give you understanding of His intent in these epistles.

Now take your sheets from the Appendix and read through II Peter several times. Make notations in the margins of repeated thoughts, words, or phrases. Spend time doing this, as it will be a tremendous help for you as you progress in this study.

Day Three — Glimpsing Jude

Yesterday you worked through II Peter. Today you will read through II Peter one more time, then read the Epistle of Jude. (Jude is also printed in the Appendix.) Be sure to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance. Again, take your time here, because observation is a most helpful tool in proper interpretation.

Day Four — The Knowledge

Having looked at Jude yesterday, today we will begin getting into the first section of II Peter. When we get into chapter two we will go back to Jude and compare the two epistles. Both epistles deal with a very important topic — obviously important at the time of the original writing, as it is important now — that of apostasy and false teachers.

So let's get started with II Peter. Understanding the first chapter in II Peter is crucial. It is the foundation for understanding the epistle. And as it is true with any part of Scripture, it is also crucial that you do not take any part of this epistle out of its context without having interpreted that section within the whole of the context, otherwise you will lose its proper interpretation. Chapters two and three rest upon the material in chapter one. So let's do thorough observation.

Let's read the first section:

II Peter 1

1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

We know that Peter is writing to the same people group he had written to previously (II Pe. 3:1). Notice that Peter mentions faith in the opening sentence of his second letter. He is writing to those who have the same faith as he. In an overall sense, he is writing to all Christians, for all Christians share a common faith — that which comes through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, our God and our Savior. Faith was also the premise with which he began his first letter, only from a little different angle. Let us review just a bit. Look back in your Appendix and read I Peter 1:3-9.

At the beginning of this first letter Peter deals with *the goal of our faith* — an inheritance which is ours through having been born again to a living hope. And this inheritance, which is reserved in heaven, is undefiled and will not fade away for those who are protected by God *through faith* (protected through their own faith) for a salvation which is yet future.

In this first letter Peter deals with the aspect of our faith which is ongoing — faith being lived out through fiery trials and suffering, which is necessary if our faith is to be brought to its proper goal. So, while we all share a common faith, what we do with that faith is not necessarily common at all. It is very individualized in that some may allow it to come to its proper goal, while others may not.

There is verse in the Old Testament which deals with faith in a way which should be understood by all Christians. The passage in Habakkuk speaks of the living out of faith. We know that our Christian experience begins with faith, but what we must realize is that thereafter, we must continue to walk in faith

toward an appointed end. This passage is quoted no less than three times in the New Testament. Read how Habakkuk deals with it:

Habakkuk 2

2 Then the LORD answered me and said, “Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. 3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay. 4 Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith...”

Through Habakkuk, God is speaking of the exact same goal as He speaks about through New Testament writers. (And should we think it would be any different?) God even says through this Old Testament prophet that the one who reads about this prophecy *may run*. And so are we to run...to run the race set before us (I Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1). God admonishes the proud in this passage and commends the one *who lives by his faith*. Both people being dealt with in this passage would be people who had begun with faith. But one goes the way of pride, and one goes the way of faith. And all is stated with an intended goal in mind.

Although the New Testament is replete with the same line of thought, using a variety of ways to say it, this specific passage is quoted three times in the New Testament, twice by Paul and once by the writer of Hebrews. Let's take a look at the way this passage is dealt with by these New Testament writers. First the writer of Hebrews:

Hebrews 10

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. 38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving [KJV: saving] of the soul.

Hebrews 10:37, 38 refer to the exact same thing as Habakkuk, only in a few different words. The writer of Hebrews understood that the vision we are to wait for has to do with an Individual coming. We can understand that this is referring to the second coming of Christ. His coming is set in time, and He will not delay. (It is a wicked and slothful servant who says, “My master delayeth His coming.”) And, by inference, the one who lives by faith will please his Master when He comes. But this same individual, who has a common faith through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, might potentially shrink back. And in that case, God would have no pleasure in him. Notice, too, if he does shrink back, he shrinks back to destruction. This destruction would have nothing to do with eternal life/damnation, but only to do with *aionios* life...life for the coming age, the age which has to do with the inheritance.

Any thoughts or comments?

Now let's see what Paul says about this to the Church at Rome. Paul has stated in the beginning sentences of this letter that he is writing to the *saints at Rome who are beloved of God* (1:7). After giving this

identified address, he says he is eager to preach the gospel to them. This would, of necessity, be the portion of the good news having to do with *the gospel of the glories of Christ*, preached to saved individuals, having to do with the salvation of the soul and the related inheritance. Why else would he feel the need to preach the gospel to people who are already beloved by God called saints?

Romans 1

15 Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

Paul would have been very aware of the context of the passage in Habakkuk from where he drew this statement. And he would have used it for the same intent as Habakkuk.

Notice that Paul states that *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*. Our initial knowledge (gnosis) of God’s righteousness begins with faith. And the continual growing knowledge, the knowledge which is a mature knowledge (epignosis) is also revealed in faith. It is *from* faith *to* faith. And that is what Peter draws our attention to in the first chapter of his second letter. How to grow up in our faith... “to faith diligently add...”

But before we get back into II Peter let’s look at one more passage wherein Habakkuk is quoted. Paul uses the quote again when he wrote to the Church at Galatia, one of the provinces addressed in both of Peter’s letters. It is found in v. 11 in the following passage:

Galatians 3

1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain? 5 Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.” 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

And to show us that Paul truly was referring to the inheritance and not to the free gift (the same thing to which Habakkuk spoke), he mentions it just a few short verses later...

18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

So now...what does all of this have to do with Peter’s letters? Well...knowing that Scripture interprets Scripture, it is good to look at related passages to get a better interpretation of what a particular section of Scripture is all about. In both letters, Peter deals with our ongoing faith. He begins in his first letter,

telling his readers *what* the goal of their faith is, then explains what is necessary in order for faith to be brought to that goal — one must endure suffering. But in the second letter Peter begins with our common faith, that which is shared by all Christians, and is ready to explain how that faith grows, the process needed to bring faith to completion. What steps to take. What to beware of. Who to stay away from. And he develops it from there, warning against apostasy brought about through the work of false teachers — teachers dealing falsely with respect to the faith and the intended goal, the salvation of the soul.

In order for us to have a jumping off place tomorrow, would you spend a few minutes and write a synopsis of what you learned today. We will review that tomorrow, then pick up where we left off. Write your synopsis here:

Day Five — Everything Pertaining to Life and Godliness

Yesterday we spent some time glimpsing the premise of faith in both of Peter's letters. Now, so that we can continue that flow of thought, would you read the synopsis which you wrote at the end of yesterday's homework?

Now we are ready to jump back into II Peter. We will do careful observation of chapter one, for in it we have the foundation upon which the rest of this epistle rests. Let's keep going.

II Peter 1

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge <1922> of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge <1922> of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge... in the epignosis. Think for a moment what this verse is saying. Grace and peace. After looking up the definitions, write out your thoughts.

Then, what does it mean to have grace and peace *multiplied* to you?

Then, how is grace and peace multiplied? According to this passage, what is the means, the conduit for grace and peace to be multiplied?

In this Greek word for *knowledge* (vv. 2,3), there is an intensified meaning, it means a fuller, clearer, more thorough knowledge. Only a believer may attain to this level of knowledge (*cf.* I Cor. 2:14). Read the definitions below with the Strong's number:

<1922> epignosis

1) precise and correct knowledge

1a) used in the NT of the knowledge of things ethical and divine

The verb form explains it more emphatically —

<1921> epiginosko

1) to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly

1a) to know accurately, know well

2) to know

2a) to recognize

2a1) by sight, hearing, of certain signs, to perceive who a person is

2b) to know i.e. to perceive

2c) to know i.e. to find out, ascertain

2d) to know i.e. to understand things ethical and divine

Peter is addressing this second letter to people who should be in the possession of this type of knowledge. He knows the history of his own ministry as well as Paul's ministry in this region. And he is asking that God's grace and peace *be multiplied* to them in this kind of knowledge. Peter must have had a sense, given by the Holy Spirit, what faced these knowledgeable Christians. He knew false teachers were rising up from among them, and he knew they would need an abounding supply of God's grace and peace if they were to withstand the onslaught of a most deadly foe — a false teacher. (More about false teachers in the weeks to come.)

Now look at verse three. *God's divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.* And this, through that same type of knowledge. It is in the epignosis that grace and peace can be multiplied to us; and it is in the epignosis that we are *granted everything that pertains to life and godliness.* Can you see how important it is to strive to attain to epignosis? How would you strive to attain to this epignosis? And according to this passage, what does the epignosis afford us?

First let's first look at God's divine power. Paul deals with this power in a passage in Philippians. In this passage, Paul pulls together several of the thoughts we have looked at in the past two days. He speaks of the righteousness not based upon the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ. And notice that Paul uses the name *Christ Jesus* as opposed to *Jesus Christ* here. Additionally, He says he desires to "*gain Christ.*" Christ is the Greek word for the word *Messiah*. The inferred focus here is upon the Messianic aspect of the Son of God — the Anointed King. Read the passage, paying close attention to v. 10, underlining the phrase which has to do with power:

Philippians 3

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Check out the order of things in verse ten. Write down the things which Paul wants to know or do in the order given:

...that I may know 1)

2)

3)

...being 4)

...in order that I may 5)

Why would resurrection come prior to suffering and death? Wouldn't suffering and death be followed by the resurrection? Most of the time when the word *resurrection* is used in the Scriptures, Christians tend to think of the bodily resurrection which will take place at the gathering of the Church in the heavenlies. But that is not what is always being dealt with at every mention of the word *resurrection* in Scriptures. And in this particular case, that is not what is being dealt with at all. Paul was pointing to the power which God exuded when He raised Jesus from the dead. It is *this* power which we are to come to know — and that through faith. It is also in coming to know this power which affords us the ability to share in His sufferings and then to be conformed to His death. Check out the order here.

As mentioned previously in this study, when we are baptized, we are baptized in into the death of Christ. And we are buried with Him in death. Now, what about His resurrection? Are we not *also raised with Him in life*, so that we can walk in newness of life (Ro. 6:1ff), so that we can walk in the Spirit, in our new nature, and no longer in the flesh, or in our old nature? Is not our old nature buried with Christ in baptism? And are we not to reckon that old nature dead? Yes, and with that being the case, are we now to walk in *the power of His resurrection*? This is how baptism now saves us, as mentioned in I Peter 3:21. That is the picture! And what a picture it is!

Paul wanted to know Christ and *the power of His resurrection*. Then, in walking in the power of His resurrection, Paul would have the power to share in the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Think about it. After all that, he might attain to the out-resurrection. (More on that in the lecture.)

Are we not to take up our cross and follow Him (Mt. 16:24)? The cross is an instrument of death, and only walking in the power of Christ's resurrection, can we follow Him into suffering and death, dying to our old nature and desires daily. That is the power which is available to us.

With that in mind, reread II Peter 1:2-4 and see if it has more meaning to you.

It is walking in this power which allows God to grant us everything pertaining to life and godliness. And notice one more thing. God's divine power comes to us through the true knowledge of Him — the epignosis. SO we have grace and peace multiplied to us through the epignosis, and we have His divine power through the epignosis.

Then we see that He *called us by His own glory and excellence*. We learned quite a bit about His calling us in I Peter. We saw that we *have been called for this purpose* — to suffer with Christ (I Peter 2:20ff), and we *have been called for the very purpose that we might inherit a blessing* (3:9). Called to suffer,

called to inherit a blessing, all has to do with sharing in Christ's glory. But remember, many are called, but few are chosen (Mt. 22:14). Read this next passage from I Peter, paying close attention to v. 13.

I Peter 4

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

So we have been called, not only *by* His own glory and excellence, but we have been called *to share in* His own glory and excellence. In fact, God promises that we might share in His divine nature, which is just what our next verse deals with.

4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Precious and magnificent promises. We come into more understanding of the implications of these promises in God's Word as we grow in knowledge of Him. And these promises all have to do with prophecy, with the second coming of Christ, with His future kingdom, and our participation with Him then and there. *Precious and magnificent promises!*

The word *magnificent* is superlative in the Greek, which, simply stated, means it can't get any better than what it is. And just think, this perspective is God's perspective! Our perspective would be too measly. This is from God's perspective. He is the one who gives the superlative. He sees them as "the greatest and precious promises." **MAGNIFICENT** in His eyes!

These promises are not only very great, very magnificent in God's eyes, they are also *precious* to Him. Very valuable, very costly, honored, esteemed, beloved. If they are so to Him, how should we view them? In fact, let me ask you, how do you personally view them?

One more thing before we close for the day. Notice that the only way that we can grasp the magnificent promises and become partakers in His divine nature is *by escaping the corruption that is in this world*. That corruption is lust. Lust is God-given personal needs and desires *gone awry*. God made mankind to have personal needs and desires, which are to be met in certain ways...God-given ways. These God-given personal needs and desires are there for reasons to honor God. These become lustful when the personal needs and desires are corrupted by the flesh, or the old nature. Christians are to have escaped this by way of resurrection power, spoken of earlier in the lesson. Peter lays aside this thought for a moment, but comes back to it several passages later...speaking of false teachers.

II Peter 2:20 For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

What a warning! We must take it to heart. We'll end with that thought for the week. See you in class. On a separate sheet, please feel free to write out any thoughts or comments you have about what you have learned in this lesson.