

1 Peter

By Dr. Alan Cobb

Author:

Both letters begin with the traditional form of identifying the author and the author says he is Peter, an apostle and servant of Jesus. So it would seem reasonable to say the author is the disciple Simon who walked with Jesus and was renamed “Peter” by him. But that has not kept some scholars from saying it was not Peter, but an anonymous author who tried to use Peter’s prominence to give authority to his writing. So what is the evidence for the authorship of these letters? There are clear similarities between 1 Peter and the speeches of Peter that have been preserved for us by Dr. Luke in the book of Acts. Here are some examples. Christ is the rejected stone (1 Pet 2:4, Acts 4:11). God is not a respecter of persons (1 Pet 1:17, Acts 10:34). God is the judge of the living and dead (1 Pet 4:5, Acts 10:42). A doubting scholar would explain that this was just the author using Peter’s words to lend authenticity to his work. Some doubters claim that the authentic Peter would not have referred to himself as a “fellow elder” nor would he have said that he was a witness of Christ’s sufferings since he ran away and was not at the foot of the cross as Jesus suffered and died. The answers to these objections are simple. As for calling himself an elder, John also does this in 2 and 3 John because it is a recognition of their maturity and leadership in the early church and not just a separate office in church hierarchy. As for not being a witness of Christ’s sufferings, Peter did witness his suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46 and Mark 14:32-42). Peter followed John at a distance as Jesus was led away captive to the beginning of his trials, first before the high priest and Sanhedrin in the high priest’s courtyard where he was spit upon, slapped, and struck (Matt 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54-65). Some doubting scholars claim that Peter was just an unlearned fisherman and as such would not be capable of the quality Greek writing of these letters. But that objection overlooks the fact that Greek was the language of business in those days and also that Peter had Silas, a Greek, helping him with the writing (1 Pet 5:12) and this Silas may have been the same one who traveled with Paul and may have scribed some of his letters. Also, these doubting scholars overlook the overwhelming acceptance of the early church leaders, like Irenaeus Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Theophilus of Antioch who quoted from the both 1 and 2 Peter and identified them as written by the Apostle Peter.

Peter was among the first of the Twelve that Jesus called to be his disciples. He ran a fishing business in Bethsaida (John 1:44) on the Sea of Galilee along with James and John (Luke 5:10). His Hebrew name was Simon and he was the son of Jonah. He had a brother named Andrew who also became Jesus’ disciple (Matt 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-18; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:40). Peter was married and Jesus healed his mother-in-law at their home in Capernaum (Matt 8:14-14; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39). The disciples saw Jesus walking on the water as they were sailing on the Sea of Galilee, and when they recognized him, Peter asked Jesus to command him to walk out to him on the water. Jesus commanded it and Peter walked on the water until he took his eyes off of Jesus and became afraid of the wind blowing against him (Matt 14:22-30). When Jesus asked his disciples who the crowds say he is and whom the disciples say he is, it was Peter who quickly answered that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ) of God (Matthew 16:13-19; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-20). Then shortly after that when Jesus predicted his coming death, Peter was the one who quickly rebuked Jesus for saying that and received Jesus’ rebuke in return (Matt 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33). Peter, along with James and John, were the only disciples allowed to enter the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler, and see Jesus raise Jairus’ daughter from death (Mark 5:37-42; Luke 8:49-55). Again, it was only Peter, James and John who witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration on the mountain and heard God say, “This is my Son whom I love. With him I am well pleased. Listen to him.” (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) At the beginning Jesus’ last supper with the disciples, Jesus washed their feet and Peter initially refused until Jesus said (John 13:1-8) “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” Peter was selected with James and John to accompany Jesus slightly away from the other disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane to pray with Jesus, but they all fell asleep while Jesus agonized in prayer (Matt 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42). Peter denies Jesus three times during the night as Jesus is tried before his crucifixion (Matt 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27). The last of the miracles that is recorded that Jesus did was the healing of the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, after Peter had cut it off with a sword (John 18:10-11). After his resurrection, Jesus appears to Peter and six of the eleven

remaining twelve disciples while they are fishing on the Sea of Galilee, cooks and feed them breakfast of bread and fish, and then restores Peter to his position as leader of the disciples (John 21).

Peter led the disciples to replace Judas Iscariot with Matthias (Acts 1:12-26). After the empowering of the Holy Spirit, Peter addressed the crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Feast of Shavuot – the Feast of Weeks – celebrated 7 weeks after Passover), witnessed to them about Jesus, and 3,000 of the people became believers that day (Acts 2:1-41). Peter, along with John, healed a beggar at the entrance to the Temple who had been crippled since birth and the man was able to walk and dance (Acts 3:1-10). For this healing, Peter and John were hauled before the Sanhedrin and commanded not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. But they replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:1-20) Peter was the one who spoke God’s judgment on Annanias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit about the price received for their property that they said they were giving to help the needy believers (Acts 5:1-11). Peter and the other apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people of Jerusalem and were put in public jail. But during the night an angel opened the doors so they could leave and told them to go to the Temple courts and tell people about the new life Jesus had brought to them (Acts 5:12-20). The next morning they obeyed and for this Peter and the apostles were again hauled before the Sanhedrin and reminded that they had been told not to speak about Jesus, but Peter replied, “We must obey God rather than men” and then witnessed to them about Jesus being raised from the dead (Acts 5:21-33). Peter and the apostles were flogged (beaten) and then released, but they didn’t stop speaking about Jesus (Acts 5:40-42). After the stoning of Stephen which brought great persecution against believers and their scattering to other parts of the Roman world, Peter went with John to investigate whether some Samaritans had believed in Jesus. When they met the Samaritans, they prayed for them and they received the Holy Spirit as a sign that God had saved them (Acts 8:14-17). Then Peter had a confrontation with Simon, the magician, who wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-24). Peter went to visit the saints in Lydda (about 10 miles inland from Joppa) where he healed a man named Aeneas who had been bedridden for eight years and many people believed in Jesus (Acts 9:32-35). Word that Peter was in Lydda prompted believers in Joppa to send for him because one of the women, named Tabitha (Dorcas) was sick. She died before Peter arrived, but he raised her from death and many people became believers (Acts 9:36-42). Peter was called to the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius so he could explain to him about Jesus. Peter didn’t want to go but God gave him a vision of a sheet filled with unclean animals and told him to kill and eat some. When Peter rejected the idea because the animals were unclean, God told him not to call impure that God has made clean, indicating to him that he should go to the house of Cornelius (considered by the Jews to be unclean because he was pagan) and speak about Jesus. Peter obeys and Cornelius and his whole house believe, are baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as a sign of their belief and acceptance by God (Acts 10). After King Herod killed James, the brother of John, he had Peter put in prison because he intended to kill him after the Passover. The night before Herod was going to bring him to trial, while believers were earnestly praying for him, God sent an angel who caused the chains that bound Peter to two guards to fall away and then he led Peter through the guarded gates to freedom (Acts 12:1-11).

When Paul came to Jerusalem and met with Peter and the council of believers because he was being accused of wrongfully allowing Gentiles to become followers of Jesus without first converting to Judaism, Peter addressed the council and reminded them that God had revealed to him before he went to Cornelius that Gentiles could believe and receive God’s forgiveness and be declared clean without becoming practicing Jews (Acts 15:7-11). Paul rebuked Peter when he was in Antioch for refraining from eating with Gentiles as he had been doing just because some Jewish believers had arrived from Jerusalem (Gal 2:11-14). Paul says Peter ministered in various places outside of Jerusalem taking along with him his wife (1 Cor 9:5). That is the last of the biblical record about Peter except for these two letters.

Eusebius, the early church historian, records that Clement of Alexandria said that after the ascension of Jesus, Peter, James and John chose James the Just (Jesus’ half-brother) to become the bishop of Jerusalem because they were satisfied with their leadership positions and didn’t want to be striving after honor for themselves. Early church tradition says Peter ended up in Rome, possibly around the time of Paul’s beheading in 65 AD.

Then during Nero’s persecution of believers in 67 AD, he was crucified upside down at his request because he didn’t feel worthy of dying like Jesus.

Audience

Peter addresses his letter to “God’s elect” which can only mean believers. These believers are scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, which the map at the right shows were the northern, central and western areas of modern day Turkey. Some scholars suppose that the audience is only Jewish believers because Paul was to take the gospel to the Gentiles while Peter was to go to the Jews (Gal 2:8). But, on his missionary journeys, Paul says he went first to the Jews in an area to give them the opportunity to



believe and follow Jesus and then expanded to the Gentiles. So most, if not all, of the churches in the area would have been a mixture of both Jewish and Gentile believers. It is highly unlikely that there were churches in those Roman provinces composed solely of Jewish believers. The provinces, except for Pontus and Bithynia, were areas where Paul evangelized a great number of Gentiles and some Jews.

Place and Date of Writing

Peter ends his first letter by saying that “she who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings” (1 Pet 5:13). Peter says in his introduction that he is writing to those chosen by God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit for obedience to Jesus. That they are together chosen indicates Peter is speaking of believers who live where he is doing the writing. Mark is with him and we know from Paul’s letter to Philemon, which was written while he was in prison in Rome, that Mark was with him at that time. That Peter indicates he is writing from Babylon does not mean he is in the area of ancient Babylon from which we have the stories in the book of Daniel. There is no biblical or extra-biblical writing that suggest that Peter ever traveled to that area to minister. Eusebius quoted Clement of Alexandria that “Peter mentions Mark in his first letter and that he composed this in Rome itself, referring to the city metaphorically as Babylon.” Peter mentions that his readers “have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials” (1:6), that they have endured suffering for doing good (2:20; 3:17), that they have suffered for what is right (3:14), that they are suffering a painful trial (4:12), and that they are insulted because of the name of Christ (4:14). Peter appears to be encouraging the believers in the area where Paul had done most of his evangelization, probably because they have heard of Paul’s death and are experiencing the same persecution that caused it (and we know from early church tradition that it also caused Peter’s death in a couple of years). So Peter writes from Rome about 65 or 66 AD. Some scholars think the letter may have been written as early as 64 AD.

Chapter 1

Verses 1 – 2. Peter identifies himself as the author of the letter and the believers in the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia as his audience. He encourages them by reminding them that they were chosen by God, the Father, sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit, to live in obedience to what Jesus taught, and that they had been sprinkled by the blood of Jesus. Notice that he includes all of the Trinity in

his encouragement. Then he offers a blessing that they would have an abundance of grace (God's gift of freedom from the power of sin) and peace (Hebrew concept of shalom – completeness with God).

Verses 3 – 9. Since Peter is writing to encourage the believers because of suffering they are experiencing, he begins the body of his letter by reminding them of their identity as believers and followers of Jesus. He praises God for his great mercy (unmerited favor) in giving us a new birth (the indwelling Holy Spirit) into a living hope and inheritance in heaven (eternal life in a right relationship with God) through the resurrection of Jesus from death (proof that what he said he was doing was actually accomplished). He reminded them that their inheritance can never perish, spoil, or fade and through their faith are shielded by God's power (Holy Spirit) until the time when he is ready to reveal that in the last time (time of final judgment and second advent of Jesus). He reminds them that they greatly rejoice in this, even though right now they are suffering grief in all kinds of trials (tests that challenge our faith in Jesus). Then he says that the trials can prove their faith is genuine (trials do to faith what fire does to gold – purify it) and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus is revealed (second coming). These believers were not present to walk with Jesus or even see him while he walked around Israel, but still they love him, believe in him, and are filled with joy (difficult for non-believers to understand) because they are receiving the goal of their faith which is the salvation of their souls (an eternal, right relationship with God like Adam and Eve had before they disobeyed God and tried to be god for themselves – determining what is right and wrong).

Verses 10 – 12. Now Peter reminds his readers that prophets through the ages spoke about the salvation that has come to them. That salvation which was accomplished by Jesus' suffering and death on the cross was foretold by the prophets although they didn't know and couldn't discover the time and circumstances that would bring it about. The Holy Spirit guided them as they pointed to the sufferings of Christ (Messiah that God foretold in the Garden of Eden would eventually come) and the glories that would follow (restored relationship with God in a heavenly home that surpasses even the beauty of the Garden of Eden). The prophets couldn't understand how the sufferings could result in glory until Jesus accomplished it. The Holy Spirit revealed to them that they were serving those who would experience what they were foretelling. And those things have been told to the readers by those who told them the gospel (good news about what Jesus had done) because the Holy Spirit sent them with the message. Then he says that even angels long to look into those things. The implication is that the angels do not fully understand it or the timing.

Verses 13 – 25. In verses 3 to 12 Peter encouraged walking in hope. Now he is going to encourage walking in holiness, reverence, and love. He says to prepare for action and be self-controlled by setting your mind on the grace (freedom from the power of sin) which they will experience when Jesus is revealed (comes to earth for the second time). So he says to be obedient children and not give in to evil desires as they had done while they lived in ignorance (of God's love). They should live holy (set apart from evil) in all they do because God has called us to be holy just as he is holy. They know that God judges every person's work impartially (what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong regardless of who the person is or their relationship with God), so they should live as strangers to the world in reverent awe of God as judge and his standards.

Then he reminds them that their redemption (purchase) from the empty way of living that they had received from their forefathers was not by gold, silver, or anything that is perishable, but by the precious blood of Christ (Messiah) who was an unblemished sacrifice for them. Then he tells them that Jesus was chosen to be the Messiah before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times (expecting that Jesus would return at any time) for their sake so they could believe and be restored to a right relationship with God (as he had promised from the Garden of Eden). Because of Jesus, they have believed in God who raised Jesus from death and glorified him. So their hope and faith are in God (who has done as he promised).

Now that they have purified themselves and obey the truth (love God with all your heart, mind, and soul and love your neighbor as yourself) they are showing that truth by their sincere love for their fellow believers (the world will know you are my disciples if you love one another). Then he reminds them they have been born again (as Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be born of the Spirit) and that it was not of perishable seed

(natural birth) but of imperishable seed (Holy Spirit being implanted in them) because of the living and enduring (eternal) word of God. Everything that is material, like grass and flowers, can and will lose their glory and wither away (die) but the word of God will last forever. And that is the word that has been taught to them.

Chapter 2

Verses 1 – 10. Now Peter explains how to live while suffering grief in all kinds of trials. “Therefore” refers back to all Peter has previously written and he says to get rid of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander just like removing soiled garments. None of these activities are compatible with loving your neighbor as yourself. Then he urges his readers to do something positive – crave pure spiritual milk so they can grow in their salvation (become mature believers who better live as Jesus taught). Peter doesn’t say to move beyond spiritual milk to the meat of doctrine as Paul does (1 Cor 3:1-2) or the writer of Hebrews (Heb 5:11-14). Because they have tasted that the Lord is good (experienced forgiveness of their sin of disobedience – his grace) they should crave to live more like Jesus lived in obedience to God’s will. Craving pure spiritual milk should lead to craving meat as a person grows in maturity.

Peter uses the image of building to explain how living as he has proclaimed (holy, in reverent awe of God, loving toward others, and craving maturity) is accomplished. He refers to Jesus as the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God. People who believe that Jesus is God and trusts his death to provide them a right relationship with God are also living stones that God is using to build a spiritual house that will offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. Then he quotes Isaiah and the Psalmist to show that this was foretold. Isaiah 28:16 speaks of God choosing and laying in Zion a cornerstone (the basis upon which a building was built) and that everyone who trusts in him (the cornerstone) will never be put to shame. To those who believe, that stone (Jesus) is precious, but to those who don’t believe, the stone is a stumbling block. From Psalm 118:22 he says the stone rejected has become the capstone (stone which finishes the building). And from Isaiah 8:14 he says that the rejected stone causes those who reject to stumble and that it is a rock that causes them to fall. Since Peter is writing to believers (Jewish and Gentile) from several Roman provinces and not just one individual or church, he seems to be indicating that God has laid a foundation not just in physical Jerusalem but in the heavenly Jerusalem that will come, and that foundation is Jesus who is a rock. Upon this foundation, God is building believers into a spiritual dwelling (Church universal) which together will offer him spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable. Anyone who rejects (stumbles over) Jesus being the Rock, will experience what their rejection predestines them to experience.

The Jewish leaders should have recognized Jesus was the long awaited Messiah and accepted him. If they had, then Jesus would have become the capstone finishing the Jewish religion as he established his kingdom at that time. But in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, he became a stumbling block and a rock over which they fell. Jesus then became the cornerstone upon which the Church (which will become the bride of Christ) is built, one living stone at a time (believer by believer). As a living building, the Church needs all of its members working together to offer worship (sacrifices) that are acceptable to God.

Then Peter reminds his readers (and us) of their (our) position as living stones. We are a chosen people, chosen by God from before the foundation of the world because we chose to believe and have faith in Jesus, the living cornerstone. We are a royal priesthood because Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek who was the priest of God and King of Salem (Jerusalem) without a genealogy and without beginning or ending of days. (Gen 14:18; Psalm 110; Hebrews 7:3) Our priesthood comes from Jesus sending the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, making us a new creation. We are a holy nation, without physical boundaries on earth and set apart to glorify God and lead people to recognize who Jesus is and what he has done for them. We are a people who belong to God so that we can declare to other the praise of him who called us out of the darkness of the way we were living into his marvelous light. Once, unbelievers were not a people. They were individuals going their own way, the way that seemed right to them (the lie of Satan in the Garden that they could be god for themselves knowing right from wrong). But believers are the people of God because they have received mercy (God’s unmerited favor) having been called to become part of the family by believing and trusting in Jesus.

Verses 11 – 12. Peter calls his readers to live as aliens and strangers in the world and as such to abstain from all the sinful desires (Satan’s temptations to disobey God) which are at war with their soul. Before they became believers they lived in ignorance of those sinful desires and thus followed them without understanding what they were doing. But since they became believers they now walk in the light of God’s word and should recognize and flee from those sinful desires so that they can walk like Jesus in obedience to God’s will. Then he says they should live such good lives among the pagans that even though someone accuses them of doing wrong, others may see their good deeds and glorify God when he returns. Living lives filled with obedience to God will result in good deeds that others will see. That won’t stop some people from accusing believers of doing something wrong, but when Jesus returns they will recognize the truth and glorify God.

Verses 13 – 17. Now Peter tells them to live with respect for those in authority for the Lord’s sake. That applies to every authority instituted among men, whether it is a king or his governors. That’s quite a statement to make to people who are suffering because of trials, especially the heavy authority of Rome and its governors who oppressed the people. Paul went a little farther when writing to the Romans. He said, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” (Rom 13:1) That doesn’t mean God approves of what the governing authorities are doing because they may be doing what is not according to God’s will, but he has allowed them to be in authority so believers should submit to their authority as long as they don’t demand believers do something that is opposed to God’s will. That is why Peter and the apostles told the Sanhedrin (the ruling Jewish religious authorities) “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29) Peter says it is God’s will that the foolish talk of ignorant people would be silenced by believers doing good. He says to live as free but not use that freedom as a cover for evil because we are to live as servants of God. So he tells us to show proper respect to everyone – to love believers, fear (have awe of) God, and honor the king (ruling authority).

Verses 18 – 25. Peter moves from submission to governmental authorities to a situation in which many of his readers may have been. The Greek word translated “slaves” is their common word for a household servant. Almost all household servants were slaves and had little say over how they lived their lives. Their master had complete authority over everything the servants had and everything they were allowed to do. Some individuals because of financial or other troubles were sold into slavery as payment of their debt to the individual wronged. Sometimes a family would sell a child into slavery because they couldn’t afford to take care of them. Some people were born to slaves and thus became a slave. Some people willingly became slaves because it was a better life than they presently had. You have to remember that if you have seen the generosity and care that a master gives to his slaves it could easily be a better life than trying to provide for yourself or your family. No matter how a person became a slave, their life from that time on was at the mercy of their master who, by the culture of that day, could have the slave beaten or even killed for any minor offense or disobedience. So many slaves lived in fear of their lives. Peter probably didn’t write about the master’s responsibilities because his readers wouldn’t have been masters. But he wanted his readers to know how they should show submission to their masters and honor God in the process.

Peter says to submit with respect to masters, whether they are good and considerate or harsh. It is commendable if a person bears unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. There is no credit to for person who receives a beating for doing wrong because they deserved it. But suffering for doing good is commendable before God because you are following Christ’s example. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his words, but people still hurled insults at him. And when he suffered, he made no threats but trusted himself to God who judges justly. Jesus bore the pain and suffering that our sin deserved so that we could die to sin and live for righteousness. Then he reminds his readers that formerly they were like sheep going astray, but because of trusting Jesus they have returned to God who is the Shepherd and Overseer (Master) of their souls.

Applying this principle to our situation today means submitting with respect to our boss at work whether that boss is good or harsh. In one case that is easy but in the other it is difficult. But submitting even when the boss treats you unjustly is a witness about Jesus and what he has done in your life.

Chapter 3

Verses 1 – 7. Now Peter moves from submission to government and submission in the workplace to submission in the home. Peter was telling his readers to be submissive to government and in the workplace because it is a witness about God and the difference believing and following Jesus makes in their lives. In the same way he tells wives to be submissive to their own husband so that if they don't believe God's word they might be won without talk but by the behavior of the wife – her purity and reverence. He tells wives that their beauty should not be from gold, jewelry, or fine clothes, but should come from within, from the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit that is of great worth in God's sight. He says the holy women of the past put their hope in God and used this method to make themselves beautiful. Then he gives the example of Sarah who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. (Gen 18:12) But Peter doesn't just tell wives to submit to their husbands. By saying "in the same way" he is relating the way husbands treat their wives to the way wives are to submit to their husbands. He tells husbands to treat their wives with consideration and respect. That means listening to their thoughts, desires, and needs before making any kind of decision that affects them. That treatment of women was very limited in biblical days when women were thought of and treated like property. Consequently, their thoughts, desires, and needs were not considered as important. That same treatment of women is still prevalent in much of the world today, especially underdeveloped and unevangelized countries. Peter indicates that if husbands don't recognize that their wives are heirs of God's gracious gift of life and don't treat them with consideration and respect, then the prayers they offer to God will be hindered.

Verses 8 – 12. By saying "finally" Peter is showing that what is coming is a summation of submission to governmental rulers, masters (bosses), and within the home. He says to live in harmony. That doesn't mean everyone has to believe or even act the same way. People are individuals and have different gifts and abilities that God has given them. He expects each individual to use those gifts and abilities to glorify him. A musical example would be that everyone doesn't have to always sing the melody line of a song. At times, everyone singing the same thing is appropriate and sounds good. But often, what sounds best is for some people to sing something that harmonizes with the melody line. They may sing to a little different beat which causes syncopation or they may even sing notes that seem to be "off key," but that dissonance provides a particular color to the music when it resolves to a harmonious chord. Peter says that to live in harmony we should be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Being sympathetic involves entering into and sharing the feelings of someone else. Paul calls it carrying each other's burdens. (Gal 6:2) It is not the same as compassion which is feeling sorry for someone's situation, but from a distance that doesn't involve sharing the suffering. To love as a brother involves being concerned with what is happening to someone in a personal way and leads to putting their needs above your own for a time. Being compassionate involves having a kindly, affectionate feeling for what is happening to someone which would lead to helpful words or even financial help, but without getting too involved. And being humble involves not thinking so highly of yourself (your possessions, position, etc) that you think less of others. Looking at these in reverse order shows an increasing involvement in some else's problems (burden) until you are carrying them as your own. This is exactly what God did in becoming human, living with us, carrying our burden to the cross and dying for us.

So Peter says not to return evil treatment with evil treatment or insult with insult. Rather, we should return evil treatment and insult with a blessing because we were called to do this so we may inherit a blessing. Returning evil treatment or insult with a blessing is not the natural, human way of acting. When our feelings are hurt or we don't get our way, we feel our "rights" have been violated and the way to have "justice" is to put the offending person in their place (down) by insult or evil treatment. In the old legal code of Hammurabi it is called "an eye for an eye." Hammurabi was the sixth king of the first Babylonian dynasty and probably ruled between 1792 to 1750 BC. He was the first to have a code of conduct written that would be the basis of dealing justly between two parties in a dispute. The Mosaic Law was basically a form of this as seen in Exodus 21:23-25, which says "But if there is a serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." (See also Lev 24:20 and Deut 19:21) But Jesus reinterpreted this for those who would follow his example and said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the

right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matt 5:38-39)

Then Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16 to wrap up his teaching about submitting and doing good even when experiencing difficult situations. Whoever loves life and good days must keep away from lying (deceitful) speech, must turn from evil and do good, and must seek and pursue peace. Lying is just a form of evil because Jesus said of Satan, “When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44b) To find any good in the midst of difficult situations, a person has to avoid doing anything that is not good and does not pursue peace. God sees everything and pays attention to the prayers of the righteous (those trusting Jesus and seeking to follow God’s will). That doesn’t mean he will intervene and change the situation, but he will give strength and guidance to help you get through it and bring good out of it. But God sets his face against those who do evil because they are following Satan’s will rather than his.

Verses 13 – 17. Peter asks who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good. The answer in most situations is that no one would harm you for doing good. But that is not true of all situations and would become particularly evident in the near future of his readers as Nero sought to get rid of believers even though they were doing good by saving unwanted babies that had been left out in the open to die. Nero sought to get rid of believers because they wouldn’t acknowledge him as lord (deity). People who do not believe and follow Jesus as Lord, but still believe in basically following the Ten Commandments would probably not seek to do you harm for doing good. But people who are radically evil (like Nero, Hitler, Stalin, etc.) would specifically seek to harm you for doing good because you are not following their evil ways. So he goes on to say that even if you suffer for doing good you are blessed. Remember that God’s eyes are on the righteous, what they do and what is happening to them. So he encourages his readers not to fear what others fear but make Christ (Jesus) the Lord of their lives. And he also says to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have which helps you get through difficult situations. But those answers must be given with gentleness and respect so that your conscience does not condemn you (clear) and so that those who malign you for doing good for Christ will be ashamed of their slander. They may not be ashamed until their judgment at the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11-15) but they will eventually be ashamed. Peter ends his thought by saying “It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”

Verses 18 – 22. Now Peter reminds his readers that Jesus is their example of how to do good in a difficult situation. Jesus died for sins (all of them) once (never has to be done again) for all (everyone), the righteous (Jesus who had a right relationship with God because he never disobeyed God’s will) for the unrighteous (everyone descended from Adam and Eve who first disobeyed God) so that he (Jesus) could bring people to God (pay the penalty required for their disobedience). Jesus was doing the highest good for people, doing what they could not do for themselves. And for doing this good, he was put to death in the body. But God’s Holy Spirit made Jesus alive after death.

Peter says that Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison, those who had disobeyed long ago in the time of Noah and the building of the ark. Here we have scholars differing about what they think Peter meant by Jesus preaching to the spirits in prison. One group thinks Jesus went to the realm of the dead (Hades) and preached to the contemporaries of Noah. Some of that group believe he offered salvation to those who would believe and announced condemnation to those who wouldn’t believe. Another group thinks Jesus preached to Noah’s generation while Noah was living and see him doing it through Noah. A third group thinks it means Jesus proclaimed his victory on the cross to fallen angels. Each group has their reasons for believing as they do and there is no definitive explanation for what Peter meant. It seems most probable that Peter means that after his physical death, Jesus went in the spiritual realm to where the eternal spirits of the dead await their judgment and preached the news that he had accomplished what God had promised beginning in the Garden of Eden – that one would come who would restore those who believed to a right relationship with God. That would be good news to those from Adam to Noah who had trusted God’s promise and tried to live in obedience to God’s will. But it would be bad news to those who had not trusted God’s promise and lived according to Satan’s way of being God for themselves, deciding what was right and wrong.

While Noah built the ark God waited patiently for people to repent of their disobedience, but they didn't, so only eight people (Noah, Mrs. Noah, his three children and their wives) were saved through the water of the flood by the ark. Peter says the water symbolizes baptism that saves because it is the pledge of a good conscience toward God (meaning a turning from disobedience to obedience of God). Peter says that baptism saves you by the resurrection of Jesus who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand (the position of power and respect) and has all the angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him.

Chapter 4

Verses 1 – 6. Having just talked about suffering for doing good and especially that Jesus suffered and died for our sin, Peter now says that he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. Since Christ suffered in his body for our sin, we should have the attitude of being done with sin and not live the rest of our lives for evil human desires (the human nature inherited from Adam and Eve) but rather live according to the will of God (obeying how God wants us to live). That was Jesus' example to us – doing God's will even though suffering insult and abuse. Peter says his readers have lived long enough doing what pagans do – lust, drunken orgies, idolatry, and such. The pagans with which they used to do these things don't understand why they no longer do them and so heap insults (abuse) on them. But, Peter says, they (the pagans who don't live according to God's will) are going to be required to give an account to him (God) who is ready to judge the living and dead. Then he says that it is because of this judgment that the gospel (good news of what Jesus had accomplished) was preached even to those who are now dead so that they can be judged according to men in regard to the body (die physically) but live according to God in regard to the spirit (not be separated from God in final judgment – second death- but live eternally with God). Peter is not saying the gospel is preached to people who are already dead and that they get a second chance to believe but that it has been preached to those who are now dead. God had the author of the letter to the Hebrews write that “man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment.” (Heb 9:27) That means there is no second chance to believe. A person has to choose to believe and accept what God has done for them through Jesus before they die or else they will experience the judgment of second death and be separated from God eternally. Peter appears to be giving his readers encouragement that their witness and sharing the gospel has made it possible for those who believed and already died to live eternally with God.

Verses 7 – 11. Just as James, Paul and John wrote, Peter says the end is near. (See James 5:8, Rom 13:11, 1 John 2:18) So he urges his readers to be self-controlled and clear minded so that they can pray. If you allow outside forces to affect how you live and mix worldly ways of thinking with God's then you most likely won't want to pray or you will pray for wrong things and therefore your prayers will not be effective. Peter considered one of the most important ways to always be ready for the end is to maintain a deep love for all believers. One way of showing that love is to offer hospitality to each other without grumbling (complaining). A person might receive persecution for giving hospitality to a known believer. Another way of showing love of believers is to use whatever gift(s) God has given you to serve others and minister God's grace in various ways. God has given every person gifts (abilities) that they can use to help other believers. Peter gives two examples of ways to serve using gifts. If anyone speaks, do it as if you are speaking the very words of God, and serve as doing it with the strength God provides so that in all things God is praised through Jesus. Then Peter ends his thought with a prayer that all glory and power will be Jesus' forever.

Verses 12 – 19. Now Peter reminds his readers how suffering fits into God's purposes. He tells them not to be surprised at sufferings as if it is something strange happening to you. Whatever we are suffering, we tend to think it is unique to us and nobody else has had it happen to them and so they can't understand what is happening to us. Peter says that suffering is not unique. In fact, no suffering is unique. We can only suffer physically, mentally, or spiritually. There may be different things that bring about the suffering, but the suffering only happens in one of those three ways and Jesus suffered all three. So, he says as we suffer we should rejoice that we participate in the suffering of Christ and in that way we will also be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If we are insulted because of the name of Christ then we are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on us. That Spirit of glory and of God is the Holy Spirit that indwells every believer.

If we suffer, it shouldn't be for doing evil things. That isn't really suffering because it is receiving what is deserved for doing wrong. If you suffer because you are a Christian following Jesus, then we shouldn't be ashamed but praise God that we can bear the name of Christ. When Peter says it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God and then contrasts that with those who don't believe it appears he is talking about our suffering for following Christ being the world's judgment on us. But God will be judge of those who do not obey the gospel. Then he quotes Proverb 11:31 to say their judgment will be much harder than ours. So he ends by saying that if we are suffering according to God's will (he allows it for some reason) then we should commit ourselves to God and continue doing good.

Chapter 5

Verses 1 – 4. Peter ends his letter with encouragement, especially to those who are leaders in the church, so that his readers would know how to live while experiencing difficulties and suffering for the glory of Jesus. Peter appealed to the elders (leaders) as a fellow elder, not just as an Apostle. He also appealed as a witness (Greek word “martus” from which we get the word martyr, one who dies for his faith) of Christ's sufferings. This indicates a participation in suffering for Christ, not just having seen Jesus' suffering. And he appealed as one who will share in the glory that will be revealed in every believer when Jesus returns to earth the second time (at the end of the Tribulation). He encourages those elders to shepherd God's flock (those believers) under their care. They are to serve as overseers (the Greek word is “episkopos” which is often translated as bishop) not because they have to but because they are willingly following God's desire for them. The elders are not to serve out of a desire to get money, but because of an eagerness to serve God and his people. As they serve they are not to lord it over God's people but be an example to them for how to live serving God. The Greek word used to indicate God's people is “kleron” from which we get the word clergy indicating the person serving God's people. Elders serve as shepherds under the Chief Shepherd Jesus. The reward for elders is not power, prestige, or wealth but that when the Chief Shepherd Jesus returns to receive from him a crown of glory that never fades. This is one of the five crowns that will be rewarded to believers. The other four crowns are: a crown of life for enduring trials (James 1:12 and Rev 2:10), a crown of righteousness for loving the Lord's appearing (2 Tim 4:8), a crown of rejoicing for evangelism and discipleship (1 Thes 2:19), and an imperishable crown for leading a disciplined life (1 Cor 9:25).

Verse 5 - 11. Then Peter admonished youth to be submissive to those who are older and that everyone should act humble with each other because (here he quotes Psalm 3:34) “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Then he gives four more encouraging admonitions. Humble yourself under God so he can lift you up when he is ready. Cast all your anxiety (fear) on God because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert because Satan searches like a lion for someone to overcome. And finally, resist Satan by remaining firm in the faith because you know that other believers throughout the world are experiencing the same kind of sufferings. Finally he gives the greatest encouragement to stand fast in the faith during sufferings and that is because God called us to his eternal glory. So after we have suffered for a while, he himself will restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast. That's an indication of the eternal body and life that we will have with Jesus. Then Peter ends this thought with a prayer that all power will be God's forever.

Verses 12 – 14. This is the closing of the letter where Peter gives his final greetings. He acknowledges the help of Silas, whom he regards as a faithful brother, in writing to his readers. He says it is a brief writing to encourage them and to testify that what they are enduring is the true grace of God so stand fast in it. He sends greeting from the believers who are with him in Babylon (Rome) and also Mark, his son in the faith. Then he asks everyone to greet one another with a kiss of love. The Greek that is translated as kiss is “philemati” which is from the verb “phileo” which indicates brotherly love. The Greek that is translated as love is “agapes” which is from the verb “agapao” which indicates sacrificial love. So he is asking his readers to greet each other for him with brotherly affection (the kiss on the cheek that is currently done in many Middle Eastern communities). Then he ends with the blessing of peace to all of them who are in Christ (believers). The concept of peace which comes from the Hebrew word “shalom” is a completeness with God.

2 Peter

Author:

There has been a lot of debate in scholarly circles about whether Peter is the author of this letter. Many use all sorts of reasoning to claim that the letter was written by someone later claiming Peter authored it (pseudepigraphy). Arguing against these claims is the fact that pseudepigraphy was recognized by the early church fathers as an attempt by people to gain acceptance for their false teachings. Thus Origen and others rejected many writings (letters and other works) because they claimed apostolic authorship yet put forth teachings which were contradictory to what was known to be taught by the Apostles. In fact, it is thought that some people were circulating letters supposed to be written by Paul and that is why he ended some of his letters by writing with his own hand to prove they came from him. (Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thes 3:17; Phil 1:19) Since the early church fathers accepted this letter as written by Peter, it means we should also accept it.

Audience

Since Peter writes in 3:1 that this is the second letter he has written to his readers, the audience would be the churches to which he addressed his first letter – those in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Those churches would have consisted of both Jewish and Gentile believers, many of whom would have heard Paul teach about Jesus.

Place and Date of Writing

Since Peter was in Rome for the writing of his first letter and he was soon crucified upside down on a cross in Rome, it means he wrote this letter from Rome also. It was probably written within a year of the first letter, so around 65 AD.

Chapter 1

Verses 1 -2. This is his introduction to the letter, stating that he, Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus, is the author. He addresses it to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received our precious faith. Referring to Jesus as our God and Savior recognizes his deity as well as his humanity. Referring to Jesus as Christ, which is the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word Messiah, recognizes his fulfilling God's promise in Genesis 3:15 that he would bring an offspring of Eve to crush the head of Satan. He proclaims that our faith in Jesus and his work on the cross in accomplishing what God had promised is precious. Then he closes the introduction with a blessing that grace and peace would abound in them through the knowledge of God and of Jesus as our Lord. Grace (God's gift of freedom from the power of sin) and peace (Hebrew concept of shalom – completeness with God) only come from knowing God and Jesus as Lord of our life.

Verses 3 – 11. Peter begins by discussing the resources believers have. First, need to remember that we have everything we need for life and for godliness (being like Jesus and obeying God) because of our knowledge of God who called us by his own glory and goodness to be his followers. Through his own glory and goodness he has given us his great and precious promises so that we can participate in his divine nature and escape the corruption caused by evil desires (our inherited nature to try to be the god of our life and decide for ourselves what is right and wrong instead of obeying God – that is what Adam and Eve willed as an inheritance to us by disobeying God in the Garden). Note that we participate in God's divine nature not that we become divine and thus no longer have the disobedient human nature. If Jesus had just paid the penalty for our sin but didn't send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us then we wouldn't have the power available to keep from disobeying God because we don't have enough power by ourselves to make the changes necessary in our life to obey God. Our participation in God's divine nature (having the Holy Spirit dwell in us) means we always have the presence of God with us in any situation and his power to endure or overcome whatever we are facing.

Peter says that for this reason (participate in the divine nature and escape corruption) we need to make every effort we can to add to our faith (trust in Jesus): goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness (virtue), brotherly kindness (from phileo), and love (from agapao). This is not a list where you have to attain or accomplish one thing before moving on to the next. It is like a recipe where you add all the ingredients and work them together to get the desired result. It is similar to Paul's listing of the fruit of the Holy Spirit to the Galatians (5:22) – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Both lists are meant to describe qualities of a mature follower of Jesus who is daily walking closer with God and becoming more like Jesus. No follower will totally become like Jesus while still living in this earthly body with its inherited nature to disobey God.

Here is a brief description of the qualities Peter lists for a mature follower. Goodness translates the Greek word "areten" which describes moral purity and uprightness of character (virtue is another translation of it). Knowledge translates the Greek word "gnosis" which refers to the wisdom and discernment a person has attained (in this context it would apply specifically to what a follower learns of and from God's word). Self-control translated the Greek word "egkrates" which means to have control of the desires and passions of the body. This directly contradicted some of the early false teachings that the body was evil (claimed by some) or unimportant (claimed by others) thus it was not necessary to curb the fleshly desires but only to think rightly. Perseverance translates the Greek word "hupomonen" which means to remain strong while enduring a heavy load. Godliness translates the Greek word "eusebeia" which describes having the character of God (and presupposes a desire to please God in all areas of life). Brotherly kindness translates the Greek word "philadelphian" which refers to the kind of love one person would have for a friend. Love translates the Greek word "agapen" which refers to the kind of love one person would have for another that is exhibited in a willingness to sacrifice something of themselves for the other person's welfare.

These are not qualities that happen instantly – they take effort and sometimes years to develop. Striving to develop these qualities in increasing measure will keep us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of Jesus (becoming like him). Anyone who doesn't possess these qualities (or attempt to develop them) has a nearsighted view of, is blind to, or has forgotten that Jesus' death has cleansed everyone who accepts it from their sin.

So, Peter encourages his readers, calling them his brothers (in the faith – not physically) to be eager to make their calling and election sure. That doesn't mean we do anything to cause our calling and election. The call is a sovereign decision of God to offer people the opportunity to become part of his family. The election comes not because we have done anything to deserve becoming part of his family, but simply because we accept his offer. The offer is that if we believe Jesus is God come in the flesh, and accept (trust - faith) his death has paid the penalty that would separate us from God, then God makes us a member of his family. We make that calling and election sure (prove it) by adding to our faith the qualities that Peter mentioned. Doing this helps us remain strong in our faith so we will never fall for the trap of believing false things about God and Jesus, and we will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of Jesus.

Verses 12 – 21. Peter makes it clear that what he has said up to this point is nothing but a reminder of what his readers already have been taught and know. He feels it is good to remind them of the truth they know lest they forget it. He indicates that Jesus has made clear to him that his death is near and so he will not be available to keep reminding them of those truths. After Jesus' resurrection, he reinstated Peter as the leader of the disciples and at that time indicated the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God – not by natural means but at the hands of those who would force death on him. (John 21:18-19) So Peter is making an effort before his death to help them remember the truths after he is gone. He reminds them that what the apostles had taught were not cleverly invented stories but eyewitness accounts of the life and power of Jesus. He specifically refers to the event on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus was glorified in his presence and he heard God proclaim that Jesus is his Son and that he is well pleased with him. Thus, God's word to his prophets, recorded and preserved in the scriptures, is made more certain because of what the apostles witnessed in Jesus' life. So we need to pay attention to it as a light shining in a dark place until Jesus returns (the day dawns and the morning star rises in

your hearts). Jesus would later refer to himself in Rev 22:16 as the Morning Star when he revealed the Tribulation, the final judgment, and the new heaven and earth to John on the Isle of Patmos. So he admonishes us to understand that no prophecy came from the prophet's own interpretation but from God as the prophet was moved by the Holy Spirit. Peter's point is that his readers should give attention to what God has said and preserved for them as well as the apostles' teaching until Jesus returns. This is important because Peter will now begin to warn his readers about false prophets who are walking among them.

Chapter 2

Verses 1 – 3. Peter acknowledges that there were false prophets among the people during the history of Israel. That fact is clearly described by the Old Testament prophets and by God's visions to them. (See Ezekiel 13) So Peter warns believers that there will be false teachers among them also. (Note the future tense – not that they are presently among them. That's what 1, 2, & 3 John are about.) That is a way that Satan works against God. He takes God's word and twists it a little to draw people away from the truth. Then, after some people have accepted the twisted word, he adds additional twists to move them farther from the truth and trusting God's word. That's why Peter describes them as secretly introducing destructive heresies and even denying Jesus who taught truth. Peter warns that many will follow that shameful way and bring the way of truth into disrepute. According to Peter it is their greed that brings them to exploit people with stories they have made up. The greed could be to gain money from teaching the people or from a desire to be looked upon as important or to have power over what others do. The condemnation of these false teachers hangs over them and although it may seem that they are getting away with their deception, their destruction is coming.

Verses 4 – 12. Then Peter gives examples of God judging the unrighteous while rescuing the righteous. He introduces these examples with the Greek "ei gar" which is translated "for if." These are historical examples so the Greek might also be translated "for since." He mentions the angels who rebelled and followed Satan and that they were put into caverns of gloom (literal translation of Greek). God did not spare the people of the ancient world who rebelled against him but spared Noah and his family through the flood that destroyed the rebellious. He brought destruction to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, making them an example of what happens to the ungodly while rescuing Lot, a righteous man living among them. These examples show God knows how to punish those who rebel against him while protecting those who obey. So God will hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment while continuing their punishment (See Jesus' teaching in Luke 16:19-31). Peter exclaims that this is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. By that he means those who secretly spread false teaching about Jesus. He says they are bold and arrogant and not afraid to slander celestial beings. And he says that angels who are stronger do not even bring slanderous accusations before God against those men. But these false teachers blaspheme about things they don't understand. They teach falsely about Jesus, claiming he was not divine but had it put upon him at his baptism and removed before his death, or teaching other falseness about Jesus' teachings. Peter compared them to brute beasts and like beasts they will perish.

Verses 13 – 22. Now Peter tells more about these false teachers so his readers will be able to recognize them. They carouse in broad daylight. They revel in their pleasures while they feast with you. Their eyes are full of adultery. They never stop sinning. They seduce the unstable. They are experts in greed. They have left the straight way (correct teaching of the Apostles) and followed the way of Balaam who loved the wages of wickedness so that he tried to curse the Israelite people for Balak as they traveled to the Promised Land. (See Num 22 – 24) They are like springs without water and mists driven by a storm (promising but harmful). They say empty, boastful words and appeal to the lustful desires of the sinful human nature to entice those who are just escaping from living in error (new believers just starting to learn to be obedient to God). They promise freedom but are themselves slaves of depravity (you are a slave to whatever you follow and these false teachers are slaves to what they are teaching falsely about Jesus and God). Here Peter introduces verse 20 with "ei gar" as he did in verse 4 so we may rightly translate this as "for since." These false teachers have heard the truth of what Jesus has done for humanity but have rejected it. For them to entice others away from that truth makes their present condition worse because they are responsible for leading others astray.

Chapter 3

Verses 1 – 2. Peter remarks this is the second letter he has written to these believers and that both were written as reminders of what they had previously been taught. He wants them to remember what was spoken in the past by the prophets and the command given by Jesus through the apostles (those who walked and talked with Jesus and heard the command from him.) Notice by saying this Peter is equating what the apostles taught with what God spoke through the prophets. The apostles' teaching, since it came from Jesus, is God's word to them.

Verses 3 – 6. Peter gave his readers encouragement in the first chapter that God has given them everything they need for life and godliness. Through his promises we get to participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. So, we should be eager to make our calling and election sure by adding to their faith the qualities he listed in increasing measure. Now, he says that they must understand the in the last days (the time before Jesus returns) people will scoff at the truth and follow their own evil desires. One of the arguments they will make to lead people away from the truth is: "Where is this coming he promised? Everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." In other words, because of their greed and disdain for God's glory, they will mock the return of Jesus in glory (John 14:1-3, Acts 1:11, and others). The rise of naturalism in the mid-1800s brought about the theory of evolution and the big bang theory to explain the creation of the world and everything on and in it, including man. They teach that there is nothing supernatural (spiritual) and that everything exists in a uniform manner (that's what leads to carbon dating, catastrophic events with meteoroids that lead to ice ages, and carbon pollution that leads to global warming). Through naturalism people show disdain for God's glory and his word and proclaim that man can make his own future (that's humanism). But, Peter says, they conveniently forget that it was by God's word that the heavens were created and the world was formed and that the original world was destroyed by a world-wide flood. This is another fact that evolution teaches is not true. Both these examples are supernatural and counter to the uniform existence taught by naturalism.

Verses 7 – 10. After reminding his readers that the power of God's word created the world and then destroyed it by a flood, he encourages them that God's word will preserve the present heavens and earth for a day of judgment by fire when the ungodly will be judged and have destruction brought upon them. This judgment is connected with the return of Jesus (Matt 25:31-46) but Jesus' revelation to John on the Island of Patmos shows that this will not occur until after the millennial (1000 year) reign of Jesus on earth (Rev 20:1 – 21:1). When Peter says that with God a day is like a thousand years, he is not establishing any time line although some people like to use it that way to say God created the world in six days and then rested, so from the creation of the world until the beginning of the Millennium should be six of God's days which would be 6,000 years. What Peter is saying is that the passage of time has no bearing on whether God's promises will be completed or not. God created time, so he exists outside of it and therefore is not bound by it as we are nor can time interfere with what God has decided to do. That's why Paul wrote to the Galatians that "when the time had fully come, God sent his Son." (Gal 4:4) Peter wanted his readers to remember that God is not bound or hindered by time but that when the time is right he will bring judgment on the godless people of the world. So they should not see the passage of time as meaning God is not truthful or cannot work, but that he is being patient with people because he doesn't want anyone to perish but give everyone a chance to repent of their disobedience by trusting Jesus' death to restore them to a right relationship with himself. Peter may be remembering Paul's writing about patience leading to salvation in Romans 2:4.

Verses 10 – 13. Peter has previously said that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from God was an example of what will happen to the ungodly (2 Pet 2:6) so now he explains that the judgment will come like a thief (unexpectedly). The beginning of that judgment occurs when Jesus returns in the sky and takes (raptures) his bride (Church) to be with him in his Father's home (spiritual realm). (See Matt 25:1-15; 1 Thess 4:15-17; 1 Cor 15:50-58) Then he describes that the heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (or burned up). This is what is described in Revelation 20:11 and Isaiah 34:4. Now Peter asks his readers: "Since everything will be destroyed in his way, what kind of people ought you to be?" Of course, his answer is to live holy (separated – set apart for God) and godly (God

obeying) lives as they wait expectantly for God's promise to be fulfilled (even if it takes a thousand years or more). And a second time Peter explains that the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But he says that in accordance with God's promise we look forward to new heaven and a new earth which will be the home of righteousness (where everything that is right with God will reside while everything else will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and completely separated from God – See Matt 8:12; 13:42, 49-50; 22:13-14; Luke 13:24-30).

Verses 14 – 16. So Peter encourages his readers to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with God when this judgment occurs. And they should remember, as Paul wrote to them, that God's patience means salvation (or at least the possibility of it for those who will believe and put their faith in Jesus). Peter says Paul writes about all these matters in his letters. Peter acknowledges that some of what Paul wrote is hard to understand. (See 1 Cor 15:50-58, 2 Thess 2:1-12 for just two examples.) Then Peter says the ignorant (untaught – not taught all the truth God has revealed) and the unstable (double-minded, fence-straddling, compromisers) distort those teachings as they do other Scriptures (this equates Paul's and the other apostles teaching with the writings of the prophets – Old Testament – Paul, himself, said what he taught was the word of God and thus the same as the prophets – see Eph 3:3-5; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15), bringing their own destruction (and the destruction of all who follow them).

Verses 17 – 18. Now Peter brings what he has been writing to a close with a summary, encouraging statement. He calls them friends and says that since they know about what he has been writing, he wants them to be on their guard so they won't be carried away (diverted from the truth they have been taught from the apostles and especially Paul) by the false teaching (made up stories) of lawless men (motivated by greed for money, position, or power). The idea that they might fall from their secure position is should not be taken to mean they would lose their salvation but only that they would lose the stability that following the truth would give to their lives. So he encourages them to grow in the grace (God's gift of freedom from the power of sin) and knowledge (relationship with) Jesus as Lord and Savior. Then he prays that Jesus will be glorified now and forever.