

Reminded of the Truth (2 Pet 1.1-4)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Little is known from this letter itself about the recipients of the letter or the context into which it is written. Throughout church history this has been understood as the second letter written by the Apostle Peter to the churches throughout the Mediterranean.
- 'To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet 1.1)
- B. Although short in its length, this letter is highly important for the church of Jesus Christ as we seek to stand firm against the waves of false teaching that will come against us as we wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. It is clear from the Scripture (and history bears witness to this) that Satan seeks to separate the church from her one true foundation (which is Christ Jesus). Many have seen two common means that he uses to assail the people of God (cf. Rev 13).
1. **Persecution:** Satan seeks to come against the people of God through the means of physical persecution and opposition. Through this means, Satan seeks to incite fear in the people of God that will lead them to fall away from walking with him in faith and obedience.
 2. **Deception:** The other common means that is used is to bring deception (false teaching) among the church — specifically in relationship to the person of Christ Jesus and what it means to obey him. Toward this end, Satan uses false teachers who seek to distort and pervert the pure doctrine of Christ in order to lead God's people astray.
- D. The church addressed in 2 Peter was experiencing the demonic onslaught of false teaching within their midst. Peter devoted the whole of chapter 2 to outlining the nature of these false teachers, their teaching, and the results of their teaching in the midst of the church.
- E. Similarly, we find ourselves in a cultural moment not experiencing the attack of persecution upon the church — but rather, we experience the reality of false teaching that threatens to separate the church from the true and firm foundation of Christ Jesus. We are witnessing a great “falling away” in our contemporary moment as people within the church are following the way of “deconstruction” and abandoning their faith in Christ Jesus.
- F. Because of this, the words of 2 Peter are highly relevant to us in our moment. Although the content of the false teaching is different, understanding **how** the apostles sought to strengthen the church in the face of demonic deception is important for us as we seek to grow in maturity as the people of God.
- G. Understanding the severe nature of deception at work among the church, Peter follows a simple strategy to strengthen the church in the face of false teaching.
1. Reminder of who they are in Christ Jesus (1.1-4).
 2. Exhortation to strive to walk in holiness in accordance with who they are in Christ (1.5-11)
 3. The credibility of the true apostolic teaching (1.12-21)
 4. Exposing of false teachers, their teaching, and the results (2.1-22)
 5. Exhortation to walk with a sober-minded view of the certain coming of the Lord (3.1-18)

H. As we work our way through this letter, it is important to realize the **primary strategy** that we find in the New Testament for combating false teaching is by **strengthening the church**. Peter does not spend time railing against the cultural situation they find themselves in. Rather, he orients his efforts toward reminding the church of who they are and shining a light on the areas where false teachings have crept in among them with devastating results.

II. REMINDED OF THE TRUTH: FIVE TRUTHS TO STAND FIRM

A. It is clear that Peter's purpose in this letter is to remind the church of who they truly are in order to stir them up toward obedience and purity of faith.

¹²Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder (2 Pet 1.12-13)

¹This is now the second letter that I am writing you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder (2 Pet 3.1)

B. In this opening section, Peter outlines five truths that are essential for Christians to hold fast to in order to walk in holiness and stand firm against deceptive teaching.

C. **Truth #1: Our faith has been given to us.**

1. Peter begins by declaring that the recipients of the letter have **obtained** their faith. This word is important because it is used commonly to talk about something that has been apportioned to someone or granted to them by lot.
2. The beginning reminder is that even the faith that you have is evidence of a gift given by God's hand — of no effort of your own.
3. The starting place of the Christian life is to receive the gift of faith *as a gift*. When Peter speaks of faith here, he means the *personal* and *subjective* faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world. This is a divine gift granted to individuals that cannot be produced by effort, intellect, or reasoning capacity but must be received from the hand of God.
4. In this one phrase, Peter gives a precise summary of the whole of the Gospel reality. This is his way of outlining the doctrine of **justification by faith**. Simply stated, Peter is reminding the Christians that the most important truth that they can remember with regards to their maturity, their wholeness, and their steadfastness in the face of deception is to believe that they have been set right before God by no merit of their own — but in accordance with the glorious mercy of God made known in Christ Jesus.
5. This truth reminds us that each of us are sinful, rebellious, and enemies of God of our own freedom. Because of this, we are deserving of death, judgment, and ultimately the wrath of God.
6. Yet, God in his glorious mercy, provided a way that we might be brought into right standing with him through the sacrificial death of his Son. Now, for all who believe upon him by faith, we can be assured that we belong to Christ and are secure in the grip of the Father.
7. To say that we have obtained/received the faith that we have is to say that our faith is **evidence** that we are the recipients of God's saving grace.
8. This situates our whole life in the purposes of God. We are no longer our own. We have been granted a faith that is in accordance with Christ's own righteousness, and now we stand in the presence of God clothed in his righteousness alone.

D. **Truth #2: God has given us everything we need to live in accordance with his ways.**

1. One of the primary ways that the church is strengthened in regard to standing firm against deception is by growing up in maturity into Christ in holiness and obedience.

¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes (Eph 4.13-14)

2. Because of this, Peter is going to spend significant time throughout this letter exhorting the Christians to pursue a life built around striving toward holiness and obedience (cf. 1.5-11; 3.11-14).
3. However, it is also important to understand that Peter does not begin his letter with these exhortations. Before exhorting the Christians, he reminds them that God has already given them all of the animating power necessary for them to walk in obedience and godliness as a gift.
4. Although there is a dynamic relationship between pursuing obedience and the animating life of God at work in us — it is important that we see that the Scripture always begins with reminding believers that God has supplied to them all of the power necessary for them to respond in the ways that he has commanded.

¹²work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil 2.12-13)

5. If we are to stand firm in the face of deception and false teaching (again, by growing in mature obedience and walking in godliness), we must recognize that God has granted to us by his **own power** the ability to walk in maturity.
6. Grace is the animating power of God's life that empowers us toward obedience. Many believers do not regularly remember or thank God for supplying the power they need to walk in obedience to his commandments.
7. We must recognize that *wherever God calls, he provides*.

E. **Truth #3: God has called us.**

1. The third truth we are invited to believe in this section is that we have been *called* by God to his own glory and excellence.
2. This truth gives us stability and confidence because God's call is an **effectual call**. In other words, God's words create reality — and when God calls something into being it is accomplished.

⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1.6)

¹¹my word... shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose (Isa 55.11)

¹⁷God... who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist (Rom 4.17)

3. We are invited to see that God has called us *unto* something — namely, to his own glory and his own excellence.
4. This further gives us strength as we receive exhortations to respond toward obedience and maturity to know that God has spoken his word over us in order to bring us into the experience of his glory (life and communion with him) and his own excellence (his holiness).

F. **Truth #4: We are granted precious and very great promises.**

1. In Christ Jesus we have been given eternal, unfailing, and unimaginable promises. Each of these promises is an opportunity for our faith to grow, and to be strengthened in our confidence before God in Christ.
2. The promises of God serve like an anchor in the midst of the storms of this life. They provide us stability and security as we lay hold of them by faith.
3. The Scripture provides for us a storehouse filled with promises that God has made to his people. We can be confident that in Christ Jesus, each of these is ours and is guaranteed according to God's unfailing word.

G. **Truth #5: We are partakers of the divine nature.**

1. The final truth that Peter lays out for Christians to be reminded of in the face of deception and false teaching is that we have become partakers of the divine nature.
2. Although there has been great debate related to this phrase throughout the history of the church, this simply means that Christians have been *welcomed into a life of communion with the Triune God* — both now (by faith) and in eternity (in fullness).
3. The ultimate destiny of every believer is to be caught up into the eternal fellowship that is shared between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Mankind was created in the image and likeness of God for the purpose of possessing the ability of living in communion with him.

4. To live in fellowship with God means that we will *know as we are known*.

¹²Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known (1 Cor 13.12)

5. To live in fellowship with God means that we will *receive his love and love him in return*.

²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17.26)

6. To live in fellowship with God means that we will *be holy as he is holy*.

²we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1 John 3.2)

III. **WAGING WAR TO LAY HOLD OF THE TRUTH BY FAITH**

- A. Believers are called to wage war in this life by seeking to renew their minds in accordance with the truth of God's word by faith.

²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (Rom 12.2)

⁴The weapons of our warfare are not of flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of Christ and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10.4-5)

- B. The way that the church is strengthened (and grows into maturity) is by receiving the truth of who they are in Christ by a spirit of revelation.

¹⁷that God... would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (Eph 1.17)

¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches... the depths of God (1 Cor 2.10)