



the second letter of peter

HOLD ON!

"He has given us his very great and precious promises."

HOLD ON TO JESUS

Peter's second letter is a practical guide for what the Christian life looks like. Peter urges us to let Jesus shape our lives by remembering what he did for us, by clinging to his Word, and by holding on to the certain hope of the glorious future that awaits us.

In 2 Peter 1:1–15, Peter talks about how we grow as Christians. Rather than just telling us to try harder, he stresses that the key to living a godly life is to keep on remembering Jesus.

2 Peter 1:1–15

1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

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

2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make

every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

KNOWING IT

What does Peter mean when he says we have a faith that's as precious as his (and the other Apostles')?

What has Jesus' divine power given us, in v. 3? What does that mean?

Tease out the logic of vv. 3–4. What does “participating in the divine nature” mean? What doesn't it mean?

In v. 9, Peter talks about being blind, nearsighted, and forgetful. What does he mean by these things? (Hint: if you're blind you can't see where you currently are; if you're nearsighted you can't see what's coming up in the distance; and if you're forgetful you can't remember what's behind you. If it's a bit unclear, have a look at the last question in “Applying it.”)

How does remembering these things help us live more and more in light of Jesus?

APPLYING IT

Have a look at the list of characteristics Peter gives in vv. 5–7. Which of these do we do well in at Village Church? Are there ones we need to work more on?

How do we take seriously what Peter is saying in verses 10–11 without reading it as legalistic (or discouraging)?

Thinking back to v. 9: If you're a Christian, do you need reminding of who you now are because of Jesus (his dearly loved son or daughter)? Or maybe what he's achieved for you on the Cross (washed you clean)? Or do you need to be reminded of the future that's guaranteed to be yours because of him (one of unimaginable peace, joy, and glory side-by-side with him forever)?

DOING IT

How can we help each other remember who we now are in Jesus, and spur each other on to live more and more in light of this?

What areas of your life would you appreciate prayer for, with vv. 5–7 in view?

HOLD ON TO GOD'S WORD

This passage contains a few curiosities: Peter references a story about a talking donkey (you can read the full story in Numbers 22:21–39) and also accuses a group of false teachers of wickedly slandering celestial beings. Despite these strange things (and whatever he means by that second one) this part of Second Peter still has a very clear message: false teaching hurts people. Peter doesn't mince words when it comes to people who lead others away from Jesus. He's very direct about what they're doing and what he believes is waiting for them.

2 PETER 1:16–2:22

1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

19 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; 6 if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw

and heard)— 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment. 10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority.

Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; 11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. 12 But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.

13 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. 14 With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! 15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. 16 But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

17 These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. 18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for "people are slaves to whatever has mastered them." 20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud."

DISCUSSION VILLAGE⁵

KNOWING IT

What is Peter basing his authority on in vv. 1:16–18? (You may also like to read Matthew 17:1–9 to see the event Peter’s referring to here.)

What other sources testify about Jesus in 1:19–21? Why does Peter say we can trust these sources? Do you think it’s a valid reason?

What, according to Peter, do false prophets do, in vv. 2:1–3 (and also 2:13–14 and 17–19)? Why does he speak so harshly against them? Do you think he’s being fair?

What’s Peter’s point in vv. 2:4–10a?

APPLYING IT

Many Christians have felt uneasy reading vv. 2:20–22, because they wonder whether it means Jesus might take away their salvation if they have a crisis of faith. Is this something you’ve wondered about? It’s worth noting that many commentators interpret Peter’s words here as referring to the people who are lead astray by the false teachers. They say he’s not referring to their eternal destiny, but rather his point is that if a believer grovels in a life of sin, their life here and now will be worse than if they’d never become a Christian. Their salvation is never in question—only the quality of their life here and now. (Passages like John 10:29, Ephesians 4:30, and Romans 8:38–39 seem to back this up.) What are your thoughts?

What do you think our response should be today to false teaching that takes people away from Jesus? Do we have the same passion for the truth as Peter? How do we defend the truth while staying true to 1 Peter 3:15–16 and Matthew 5:5 & 9?

When talking about teaching we don’t agree with, is there a danger of becoming arrogant and puffed up by knowledge rather than building up in love (1 Corinthians 8:1)? How can we stop this happening, particularly when engaging with fellow Christians we may not always agree with?

DOING IT

What are some ways we can help each other be shaped by the message of the Apostles and Prophets?

What makes it hard to do these things? How can we ask God to help us?

HOLD ON TO YOUR FUTURE HOPE

In the final chapter of this letter, Peter turns our attention to the Last Day, when Jesus will come back in his glory. He paints a terrifying picture of what this day will look like, but he reminds us that if we're Christians we have nothing to fear. Instead, our lives now are to be shaped by the future righteousness that's waiting for us. He wants our life to reflect our future reality as we wait for it in anticipation.

2 PETER 3:1-18

3 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

3 Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

DISCUSSION



KNOWING IT

What are the scoffers saying in vv. 3–4? Is this even more applicable today than in Peter’s day?

What does Peter say these scoffers are forgetting, in vv. 5–7? What does he mean?

What’s Peter saying in vv. 8–9?

What does Peter say will happen on the Last Day, in v. 10? What are your thoughts on this?

How should Christians be living in light of this day, according to vv. 11–14? Why?

The word Peter uses for “looking forward to” in v. 13 can mean expecting something in hopeful anticipation or with fear. With what attitude do you think Peter wants us to look towards this day?

APPLYING IT

If you’re a Christian, do you think about Jesus’ return much? Would you say it affects your day-to-day life? Do you think it matters?

Do you sometimes find yourself asking why Jesus is taking so long to come back? Do vv. 8–9 help?

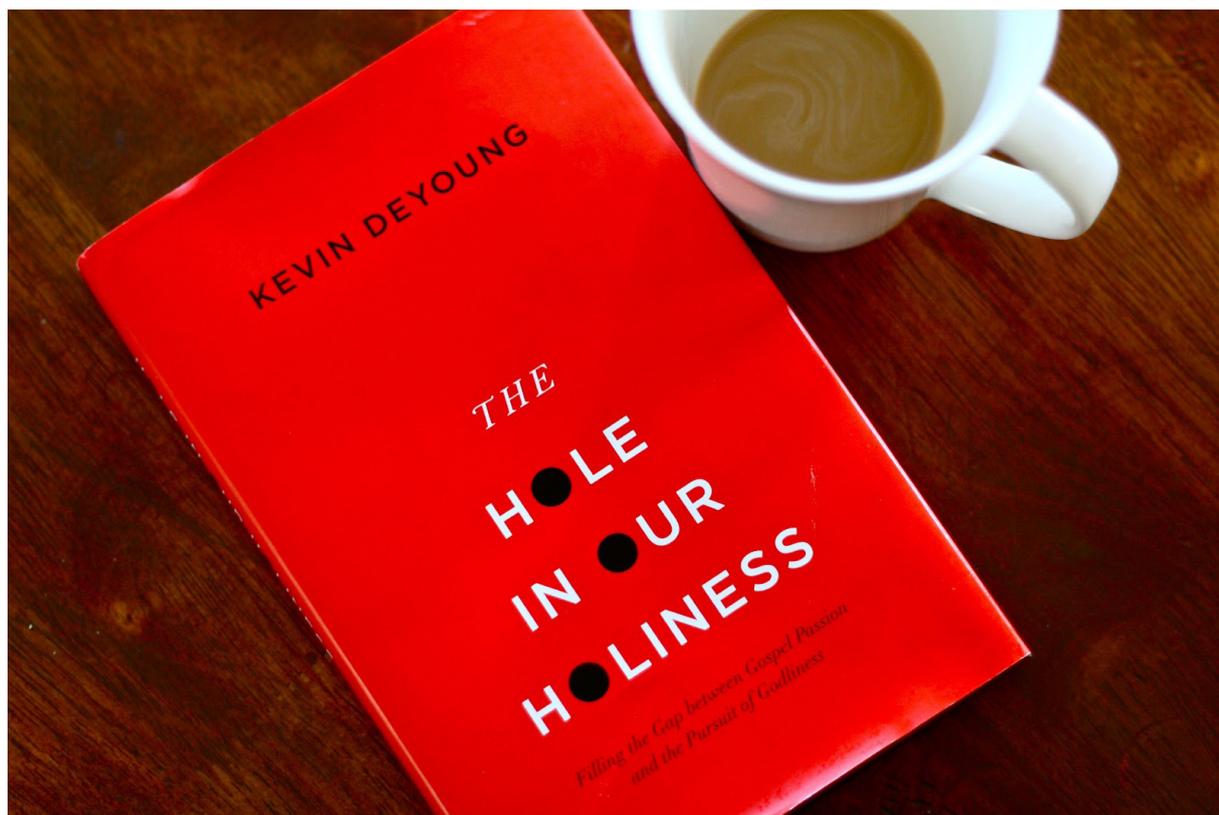
DOING IT

In light of Jesus coming back, what are some ways we can live lives that are “spotless, blameless, and at peace with him” (v. 14)? Can you think of specific things you’d like to grow in?

Thinking back to 2 Peter 1:1–15 (the first study), how can we spur each other on to living the way God wants us to, without resorting to guilt or legalism?

The hole in our holiness is that we don't seem to care much about holiness. Or, at the very least, we don't understand it. And we all have our reasons too: Maybe the pursuit of holiness seems legalistic. Maybe it feels like one more thing to worry about in your already overwhelming life. Maybe the emphasis on effort in the Christian life appears unspiritual. Or maybe you've been trying really hard to be holy and it's just not working! Whatever the case, the problem is clear: too few Christians look like Christ and too many don't seem all that concerned about it.

This is a book for those of us who are ready to take holiness seriously, ready to be more like Jesus, ready to live in light of the grace that produces godliness. This is a book about God's power to help us grow in personal holiness and to enjoy the process of transformation.



‘BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, GOD’S SPECIAL POSSESSION, THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT’.