

The Second Epistle of St. Peter

Introduction

- Alongside the four Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline letters, there are also the Catholic Epistles which the church allows us to read from during liturgical services.
- The Catholic Epistles include seven letters:
 - **James,**
 - **1-2 Peter,**
 - **1-3 John,**
 - **Jude**
- The Catholic Epistles were generally written for the church congregations to address a general problem that has been going on in multiple areas.
- This is different from the Pauline letters, where St. Paul wrote to a certain group of people (Romans, Hebrews, etc.) to address a specific topic.

Who?

Saint Peter wrote this letter as he started off the epistle by saying “Simon Peter.”

To whom was it written?

It was directed to the Christians of Asia Minor, of which the first epistle was directed to. He wrote,

❖ 2 Peter 3: 1

“¹ Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),”

When?

It was written toward the end of his life as it is apparent from his saying the verse below that was written between the years 64 and 68 A.D.

❖ 2 Peter 1:14

“¹⁴ knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”

The epistle is divided into three parts:

Theme	Chapter
The Kingdom of Heaven:	Chapter 1
The Appearance of False Prophets:	Chapter 2
The Second Coming of Christ:	Chapter 3

Reasons for writing this epistle:

1. Since the Lord has declared to him his departure from this world, he felt responsible and wanted to send his children his final commandments to guide them into the kingdom of heaven.
2. Many Christians at that time were starting to become impatient about the Second Coming, so Saint Peter wrote this epistle to encourage them to wait for the heavenly kingdom, live a life of holiness, and reject heresies.

1. Chapter 1

Greeting the Faithful

“¹ Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,”

- He called himself a bondservant, stating the truth of his position toward the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Since he talks about the kingdom of heaven and the Second Coming of the Lord, therefore, he starts by saying that it is directed toward “those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Here we notice the following:
 - It was hard for the Jews to realize that the faith delivered to the Gentiles is equal to their faith, therefore, he ascertained “like precious faith”.
 - Moreover, he wrote this verse so that the reader doesn’t think that the kingdom is only for the apostles and the disciples, he confirmed that the precious faith is equal to the apostles by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, so no one has credit for the salvation.

“³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.”

St. Peter has pointed out:

1. Those who are called to the Kingdom:
 - God has declared to us His deep love for He called everyone a general call to the eternal inheritance, for he is “the Savior”, offering us free and precious faith, without any partiality
 - This precious faith is not for a certain people nor for a specific race, but God offered it “by the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who paid a precious price on the cross for it, His blood!

2. Calling for glory and virtue:

- The call is general and free, which means the unlimited love of God who calls us to be adorned with glory and virtue. We are called to be united with Him and to follow His example, so we may obtain the love of God, His holiness, patience, endurance, meekness, and simplicity. That is why he said, “to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”
- Since we are in the world, how can we escape its corruption? By our unity with God. then the corruption of the world cannot touch us. It is a precious calling that the rays of His divine attributes, like love, holiness, and meekness, are reflected on us so we may resemble Him.

❖ Matthew 6:23

“²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

3. We have no excuse because God has granted us by His divine power all things that pertain to life and godliness, for He offered us the chance for a new and heavenly birth where we are born spiritually to resemble the Holy God.

❖ Matthew 4:16

“¹⁶ The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”

- One may wonder though, how can we escape darkness and corruption? By being baptized by water and the Holy Spirit, he is born again and becomes a partaker in the inheritance with Christ after his resurrection from the dead

❖ 1 John 3:2

“² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Fruitful Growth in the Faith

“⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence...”

- Strife is important in our lives because it presents us with the opportunity to build and appreciate our precious faith by the righteousness of our Lord and without it, we cannot cross to eternity.
- Therefore, it is important to do whatever it takes to get closer to God. That can be by reading the bible, praying to God when you're lazy, attending liturgy, doing church service, etc.

❖ Matthew 6:21

“²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

“add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

1. **Virtue:** St. Peter is asking us to add virtue to our faith so that our faith can be made manifest.

- This is proven when Jesus gave the sermon on the mountain saying:

❖ Matthew 5:16

“¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

2. **Knowledge:** Whoever walks in virtue without knowledge is like one walking without any goal; and whoever has knowledge without abiding in virtue becomes a proud talkative person.
3. **Self-control:** Whoever has practical knowledge is chaste toward sin and everything temporal, longing for eternity. As self-control is based on knowledge, it also supports knowledge.
4. **Perseverance:** Self-control coming from the love of heavenly matters gives one the endurance and patience to give everything up willingly. Perseverance or endurance supports self-control, for without perseverance, one cannot control himself.
5. **Godliness:** Enduring for the heavenly matters grants one godliness, that is, reverence and divine fear; and this godliness helps one so he may endure patiently.
6. **Brotherly kindness:** Whoever fears God treats his brothers with kindness and compassion, and this brotherly love fills the heart with godliness and reverence.
7. **Love:** Whoever has love has obtained all virtues and there is no virtue without love. As much as the heart is widened with brotherly love, as much as one love God; and as much as one love God as much as one's heart is widened to love people.

¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- The kingdom of God is wide open to anyone who struggles, for if we endure with Him, we will reign with Him also.

❖ Titus 2:12

“¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,”

Peter's Approaching Death

¹² For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³ Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, ¹⁴ knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. ¹⁵ Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”

- Realizing that he is about to depart from this world made him constantly remind his children of their eternity. A believer is not tired from hearing the same reminder, but is eager to hear it as if it is the first time.

The Trustworthy Prophetic Word

¹⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” ¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

1. His glory and honor, which He took from the Father, were revealed. He emptied Himself by His own free will, and He became a servant to accept the glory and honor from the hands of Father in complete obedience. This acceptance is not for Himself, but it is acceptance of all humanity in His person, so we may be partakers in His glory and honor.
2. The Father testifies that He is His Beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. They have heard it, and the testimony is built on two or three witnesses.

¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as *they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.”

1. The prophets have recorded their prophecies, not by their own personal efforts through their own interpretation, but they are like a harp moved by the hands of the Holy Spirit to produce sweet tune of the love of God declared in His incarnation, His death and resurrection and His Second Coming, so we may inherit with Him!
2. These prophets did not speak according to their desires.

2. Chapter 2

Destructive Doctrines

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”

- As the Holy Spirit works in the true prophets witnessing to the Lord, so the devil works in the false prophets. As there are true shepherds, there are also false teachers.
- Heresies have their negative sides, but God will continue to use these circumstances for His Glory. The disadvantages are:
 - They deny the Lord who bought them, reviling the precious blood paid for the true faith.
 - Not only they perish but they attract others for destruction.
 - They sin against God because they blaspheme the way of truth.
- On the bright side, heresies attract us to know the mysteries of God and strengthen our faith because they give us the opportunity to learn or search in the Bible to find the truth.

Doom of False Teachers

“⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶ and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked⁸ (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)—⁹ *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹ whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.”

- Amid temptation, God distinguishes between the godly and the unjust who are reserved for punishment.
- Leaving the godly to live among the evil people, does not mean that God forgot the godly, but He delivers them from temptation.
- God does not rush in punishing the ungodly, but He keeps them under punishment for the day of judgment.

Depravity of False Teachers

“¹² But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, ¹³ *and* will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. *They are* spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, ¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children. ¹⁵ They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet.”

- St. Peter summarized the attributes of the false teachers in the following:
 - They walk according to the earthly desires.
 - They despise authority.
 - They are ignorant.
 - They love pleasure.
 - They are deceivers.
 - They love wages.
 - They distort the concept of freedom.

Deceptions of False Teachers

“¹⁷ These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹ For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.””

- St. Peter excerpted this verse from the book of the Proverbs:

❖ Proverbs 26:11

“¹¹ As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly.”

- This reality will be revealed in the eternity, for “whom is revealed the blackness of darkness.” God is patient with them here on earth, but they are kept for eternal darkness.
- In pride and self-righteousness, they claim that their teachings are correct, but in fact, they are deceived by the lusts of the flesh, and they attract people to cast them in what is worse than evil.
- St. **Augustine** said:
“Though a good man is a slave, yet he is free, but though an evil person is a king, yet he is a slave.”

3. Chapter 3

God's Promise Is Not Slack

“¹ Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”

- Again St. Peter is emphasizing the Second Coming of the Lord stating that we must be ready:

❖ Luke 12:40

“⁴⁰ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

- This is the purpose of the word of God in both testaments, to wait for His Second Coming and be with Him forever.

“³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.” ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

- We are certain that there are some scoffers whom their own earthly desires will drive them to deny the divine inspiration and the resurrection and the judgment.
- St. Peter uses the story of Creation to provide a simplified picture of the coming destruction for the ungodly men.

“⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

- St. Peter here states again that God will make everything happen in due time because God does not submit to time
- While Man is limited to time, God however, is above time, and everything is apparent before Him.

❖ Psalm 90:4

“⁴ For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past,
And like a watch in the night.”

The Day of the Lord

⁹The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

- The day of the Lord, for the evil people, is like a thief who comes all of a sudden in the middle of the night, in the midst of their darkness. However, for the righteous people, it is like a wedding day where the souls are wed to their Heavenly Bridegroom.

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

- Looking towards the life of the coming age should not be a fearful subject, but a subject of hope.

Be Steadfast

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵ and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

- The purpose of all that is to benefit from God’s long-suffering for our salvation by growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. The more the time prolongs, the more we should grow without neglecting our salvation
- That is why, the church in her wisdom reads the book of Revelations on Bright Saturday, to remember God’s promise that He is coming again and to look forward to that day saying “*Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus*”

❖ Revelation 22:20

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”