

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## 2 PETER 1-2

Of the 95 churches in the city of Jerusalem, the most interesting may be **St. Peter's in Gallicantu**. It's located on Mount Zion, south of the Old City. In Jesus' day the site was within the city walls, and near the upper room where He celebrated His last Passover.

The church was built over the House of Caiaphas, where the High Priest put Jesus on trial. The basement of his house was a dungeon, probably where Jesus was held that fateful night. In fact, you can still see where the handcuffs screwed into the rock wall.

On top of the spire at the center of the church's roof is a golden rooster. "**Gallicantu**" is Latin for "**cock crow**." This church was built to commemorate Peter's tragic denial. After a self-confident Peter had boasted he would never deny Jesus, the Lord told him, "**Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.**"

Today, the church in Gallicantu depicts this tragic scene in its courtyard... A servant girl said she'd seen Peter with Jesus, when he shouted, "**No way was I with Him...**" Another girl identified Peter, but he said, "**I do not know the Man...**" Then in front of a group who said they'd seen Peter with Jesus, he cursed and swore, "**I do not know Him.**" *And "immediately a rooster crowed."*

That could've been the end of Peter. Luke 22:62 tells us after the rooster crowed, "**Peter went out and wept bitterly.**" But Jesus was not through with His disciple.

After failing the Lord so miserably, Peter was so discouraged he went back to fishing. And it was on the beach, by the sea, the risen Christ appeared to Peter. Peter was called to be a **pastor** - the word means "**shepherd**" - and Jesus re-commissioned Him. Jesus told Peter, "**Feed My lambs, Tend My sheep, Feed My sheep.**" Three times Peter had failed His Lord, now three times the Lord encourages and restores Peter.

Peter was to **shepherd God's flock**, and he stayed true to that calling for the rest of his life. *In fact, that's what he's doing here in his two letters to the Church.* As shepherds do - **he feeds and he warns the flock.**

In 1 Peter he warned primarily about **persecution**. Now in his second letter he deals with **false teachers**.

The Church in Peter's day, and the Church today, was under attack *from without* and *from within*. Peter doesn't want us to deny Jesus as he did. He desires for us to build a strong faith, and be a faithful witness. And in his final letter he writes to his **beloved** followers.

Chapter 1, “Simon Peter, a bondservant...” Literally, “a love-slave.” By the Galilee the risen Lord had asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” He’d said, “Yes, Lord.” Here he affirms his statement. He served Jesus out of love.

“And (he was an) apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ...”

Realize, faith alone is of no value. A person’s faith is only as good as its object. Folks of all religions believe in their gods, *but believing a thing doesn’t make it so.*

Christian faith proves precious since it is faith in the right standing with God earned by our Savior Jesus.

And notice, Jesus is referred to as both “God and Savior.” Once, I had a muslim lady approach me after a Bible Study. She remarked, “I really enjoyed what you had to say about God, but I got confused when you mentioned Jesus. You talked about Him as if He were God.” *And I was glad I had made myself clear!* Jesus is God! He is God incarnate - or “in the flesh.

The deity of Christ is what sets Him apart from all other religious leaders. Jesus was not simply a rabbi, or a prophet, or a holy man... It’s not even enough to call Jesus “the greatest man who ever lived.” He was more than man! Jesus Christ was “God and Savior.”

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 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...” Jesus is the key that unlocks all things pertaining to a full and holy life. If life came with a treasure map Jesus is the X that marks the spot!

It reminds me of Jeff Ferrera. In reconciling his checkbook he called the First National Bank of Chicago to check on his balance. The electronic voice told him, “You have a balance of \$924,844,204.32...” Jeff got excited, as you might imagine. Sadly though, it was a computer glitch. The billion wasn’t his to keep.

Yet in Christ, we’re spiritual billionaires, and it’s no glitch - it’s grace! Your account has been credited with His righteousness. We’re entitled to all that’s in Christ!

Verse 4, “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises...” Take note, “precious” is one of Peter’s favorite words in referring to the things of God. In 1 Peter he spoke of “the precious blood of Jesus.” And He called Jesus “the precious cornerstone.” In 2 Peter he’s already spoken of our “precious faith,” and now God’s “precious promises.” *Our blessings in Christ are Peter’s treasure!*

And notice “that through these precious promises you may be partakers of the divine nature...” When you come to Christ, God implants in you **His nature**.

His Holy Spirit writes God’s Law on your heart. God’s desires, His intents, His inclinations are uploaded to your basic nature. The Spirit installs a love for God and a love for others onto your spiritual **heart drive!**

And this new nature enables us to “escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Society’s selfishness and violence is a direct result of man’s lust.

People are driven to evil by craving what they don’t have... *a hunger for greater pleasure and possessions fuels our sin*. We escape the clutches of lustful living only when we’re filled with the joy and life of Jesus.

Verse 5, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...” All of God’s precious blessings are received by faith alone, but faith has to be fed and fortified for it to remain strong. That’s why you and I have to *add to our faith* qualities that *help it focus*, and *keep it pure*, and *enable it to grow*.

This is what Peter tells us... “add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again, we’re saved by faith alone, but faith needs to be nourished for it to grow strong.

Like a bodybuilder to grow muscles workouts are mandatory, but you get more from a workout if you add protein supplements. And this is also true in your relationship with God. It’s all faith, but faith grows by adding spiritual supplements: *virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love*.

**By faith you become a Christian**, but **virtue** or *integrity* helps you really *be who you are*... **knowledge** helps you *know who you are*... **self-control** helps you *focus on who you are*... **endurance** helps you *remain who you are*... **godliness** helps you *adjust to who you are*... **brotherly kindness** causes you to *share who you are*... and **love** is the way you *show who you are*.

Faith is like a baked potato. You can get it plain or fully-loaded. Peter says we need a fully-loaded faith.

Then verse 9, “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” I heard a great definition for the word, “**nostalgia**.” “It’s the pleasure of sitting in front of a fire, without remembering

you had to cut the wood.” We can get so use to a blessing, we forget it was gained at great cost. Our faith in Jesus is a great gift, that’s why we need to keep it strong!

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble...” The more you add the above supplements to your faith the less likely you’ll stumble.

“For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Rather than limp into the kingdom, wouldn’t you prefer an “*abundant*” entrance?

And note the words, verse 10, “*to make your calling and election sure.*” That’s a strange sounding phrase.

A “*calling*” implies we did nothing to initiate the call. *God calls, we answer.* “*Election*” means *we’re* chosen, *not we choose...* So how do you **make certain** something you had nothing to do with in the first place?

Here’s another example of the Bible’s mysterious blending of free will and predestination. God chose you, but you had to choose God - and you chose Him by faith; thus, to make your salvation sure you need a strong faith. You build up a faith by adding to it what supports it - *virtue, knowledge, endurance, love, etc.*

Verse 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.*” Remember Peter is a pastor, and a pastor’s job is to remind you of truths you already know. We occupy fallen flesh, and live in a fallen world - our tendency is to forget. In a temporal world even **eternal truths** can grow fuzzy.

That’s why when we come to church we need the pastor to twist the lens again, and bring the spiritual realities back into focus. Help us appreciate the truth.

Peter writes in verse 13, “*Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent...*” And notice, he refers to his physical body as a tent; in contrast to a house, a permanent structure. Tents are temporary. Our earthly bodies are a “*pop-up.*” They *pop up* for a time, then get *folded away.* We’re all “*here today and gone tomorrow.*”

And while Peter has the opportunity, he considers it his duty, to remind the Church of God’s truths. “*I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.*”

Author Roselyn Aranson writes a beautiful piece she entitles, “*Oh, Mr. Tentmaker.*” I want to read you a portion. *In fact, if you’re getting older and you’re not as spry as you*

*once were please listen closely*, “It was nice living in this tent when it was strong and secure. But, Mr. Tentmaker, it's scary now. My tent is acting like it's not going to hold together. The poles seem weak, and the canvas has a rip. It's scary in here, Mr. Tentmaker, why did you give me such a flimsy tent?”

The Tentmaker replies, “As the Creator and Provider of tents, I know all about you and your tent, and I love you. I made a tent for myself once. It too was vulnerable, and attackers ripped it to pieces while I was still in it - but you'll be glad to know they couldn't hurt me. The experience now prepares Me to live in your tent with you if you invite me. You'll learn, as we dwell together, that real security comes from me being in your tent with you. When storms come, I'll hold you.

Someday your tent will collapse (*it's only for temporary use*). And when it does, you and I will leave together. (*I promise not to leave before you do.*)” Our bodies are but a tent. We await the heavenly model.

In verse 15 Peter makes an interesting comment, “**Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.**”

This is why Peter put his memories in ink and on parchment. It's vital for the pastor to leave his Church a written record. Bible scholars believe Mark's Gospel was Peter's remembrances. Mark was Peter's disciple.

“**For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...**” *We didn't make up the Gospel we preach. The Gospels are not some ruse or hoax!* Here, Peter speaks for all the Gospel writers in insisting that they simply reported what they saw and heard.

He goes on to say, we “**were eyewitnesses of His majesty.**” On the top of Mount Hermon, when Jesus was transfigured in His glory, Peter saw “**His majesty.**” Up-close Peter saw the *glory of God* radiating from the *Son of God*. It was a moment Peter would never forget!

And it wasn't just what he saw, but what he heard...

Verse 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." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.**” It wasn't just Peter - “**we heard**” - three men: Peter, James, and John heard a heavenly voice. God Himself audibly identified His Son, and testified of His sinless life. In Jesus the Father is “**well pleased.**”

There are two great apologetical proofs for the claims of Christ... First, are **the eyewitness accounts**. Remember, all the Gospel writers suffered for the truths they

recorded. If they'd gotten rich off the story they might've had a motive to deceive, but it's hard to imagine men martyred for what they knew was a lie.

The second great proof of the claims of Christ were **the fulfilled prophecies**. Over 300 OT details were fulfilled by Jesus' first coming; predictions relating to *where, when, how, and why* Messiah would come. They all amazingly came true in Jesus of Nazareth.

And this is Peter's next point, verse 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...*"

Prior to our seeing Jesus *one day* - **today** we rest in His Word! And He says of God's word, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation..." I often hear folks say, "The Bible has a different meaning for everyone. You interpret the Bible your way, and I'll interpret the Bible my way." *Not so!*

Peter says Scripture is not to be "*privately interpreted.*" That means it has an objective intent. It's not what you think it means, or what I think it means, but it's what God intended for it to mean! And that meaning applies to us all. The Bible is universal truth!

Verse 21, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." And here's the genius of the Bible. Human authors penned the message so it comes across in a vernacular humans can understand. *But* those authors wrote only as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. **The end result is a book that relates to the human mind, but also reveals the mind of God.**

The Bible is God's authoritative Word! But there are people who dare to twist and cloud God's Word. Which brings us to Chapter 2, "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." *Holy men* were moved by the *Holy Spirit* to bring us God's Word, but there are also *unholy men* moved by *unholy spirits* like pride, and lust, and greed, and fame, and Satan - that have distorted God's Word.

Beware of false teachers and destructive heresies. They twist the truth to the point of denying the Lord!

Take the Mormons for example. They support biblical morality, and promote family values. Mormons usually make nice neighbors. There's only one problem: they deny the uniqueness of the Godhood of Jesus, and His once and for all atonement for our

sins... And this makes them the most lethal type of false teacher. *It's heresy wrapped in sweetness. It's a pretty poison.*

They deny the deity of Jesus, and they're sending millions of people to hell. Sadly, verse 2, "And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed." "Many will follow..."

Peter explains their appeal, "By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words..." These false teachers are fueled by ego and greed. They twist the truth to capture and boast in a larger audience.

Peter warns, "for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." Judgment is inevitable for these spiritual deceivers.

And in the next verses Peter gives three examples of how God will judge these wicked false teachers...

"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; 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..." Here's the first example of God's judgment - **the flood of Noah's day.**

Remember, this destruction was necessitated by an angelic "apostasy" or "a falling away." Jude 6 describes how "(the angels) did not keep their proper domain."

Some Bible scholars believe the demons crossed a God-imposed boundary between celestial and terrestrial. Demons took on human bodies and engaged sexually with the daughters of men. This resulted in a perversion of the human race.

It could be the Greek mythology of gods and goddesses, titans and nymphs had a factual basis in this perversion. And this is what necessitated *the severity of God's judgment!* A worldwide, global flood was needed to purify a polluted human gene pool.

And according to Peter, God took the perverse demons, and chained them in the darkest part of hell. Here, the Greek word translated "hell" is "**Tartarus.**" This is the only place in the NT where the term is used. Apparently, God created a special holding cell for these vile demons who vexed and perverted the human race.

Another example of God's judgment takes place later in Genesis. "And (God) turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly..." Sodom was also notorious for sexual perversions and an aggressive homosexuality, but that was only part of the reason God torched the city...

Ezekiel 16:49 tells us, “Look, this was the iniquity of... Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” It wasn’t just sexual sin, it was pride and a lack of charity for the poor, that brought God’s judgment down on Sodom.

Lest we get haughty, and think the lesson of Sodom doesn’t apply to us... ***Selfishness was also her sin.***

God judged Sodom, but even in that judgment there was a reminder of His mercy. For God “delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)” Lot was righteous by faith. He knew God, and tried to follow the ways of God - but his associations in Sodom made him miserable. He was tormented by the evil around him.

This is the sad plight of many Christians. They refuse to separate themselves from worldly influences, and end up oppressed. It was said of Lot, “He had enough of the Lord not to be happy in the world, but enough of the world not to be happy in the Lord.” Lot was the classic fence-straddler. Recall what Jesus told the Laodicean church, “be hot or cold, not lukewarm.”

Verse 9 tells us Sodom proved, “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority.”

Sodom teaches us that God knows how to **judge** the wicked, and **deliver** the godly from temptation. Sodom had failed to come under the authority of God’s Word. For, “They are presumptuous and self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.” Woe to self-willed people who rename their sin an “alternative lifestyle.” Renaming sin doesn’t avoid God’s judgment.

Verse 11, “whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.” When you compare this portion of Peter with verse 9 of the book of Jude, it seems that Peter is referring to the story of Michael, the archangel.

Jude tells us Michael fought the devil over the body of Moses. And if the devil had taken Moses’ corpse, Israel would’ve turned it into an idol. Yet even in the struggle, Michael was respectful of his opponent. Jude tells us, “He dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Apparently, respect is common among angels. It’s only sinful men that arrogantly buck God-given authority.



“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand.” Here’s modern society in a nutshell... **speaking evil of authority it doesn’t understand.**

*Today, we’ve defied God’s plan for the sexes and his definition of gender... We scoff at God’s authority over sexual relations... We’ve tossed out male authority in the home and church... We mock God’s authority over government... We turn a deaf ear to God’s morality.*

We ignore God’s order without realizing His will is for our safety and betterment, and negative consequences result if we disobey. We’re like **brute beasts** who run roughshod over matters we don’t really understand.

“And (these men who act like beasts) **will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.**” Folks who “**carouse in the daytime**” are people with no shame.

Peter is saying it’s one thing to sin privately, under the cover of darkness, ashamed of what you’re doing. It’s another thing to sin openly and publicly, with no squint of conscience. And this was the sin of Sodom. In the city of Sodom it was Gay Pride month all year long.

And Peter says of those without a conscience, “**They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you...**” Sadly, Peter’s readers had accepted people with these false ideas as part of the Christian family. This created a blemish on their worship. Their Christianity was a polluted brand. This is going on in churches today. It’s a sinful stain.

Verse 14, “**having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls.**” These false teachers preyed on believers with a weak faith.

“**They have a heart trained in covetous practices...**” A false prophet is a skilled manipulator. He plays on emotions - he uses circular reasoning - he employs familiar phrases while redefining their terms. He uses all these techniques to take advantage of his listeners.

“**They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness...**” Balaam was greedy. He was a soothsayer who went divining for dollars. Balaam was a prophet for hire. God warned him not to curse Israel, yet the Moabites bribed him with riches.

And “**He was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.**” Remember God spoke to Balaam through a donkey. God often speaks through strange methods.

Balaam reminds me of the CEO who offered his accountant \$100,000 to doctor the books. The man agreed. Then the boss asked if he'd do it for a penny. The accountant was angry. "Of course not, what do you think I am, a thief?" The boss replied, "I've already established that, *all that's undecided is your price.*"

It's been said, "Every man has his price!" *I hope not.* A false teacher sales out - a godly man stays faithful!

Verse 17, "These are wells without water..." The false teacher utters promises that never materialize.

He's like "clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." These spiritual deceivers are like clouds passing into oblivion.

Verse 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." The false teacher gives you a religious justification for your lust.

People get lured into the idea they can please God and satisfy their flesh simultaneously. *This is spirituality without morality.* Believing without behaving. *It's false.*

"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."

Here's the pastor who condemns the evil of adultery, while he's involved in a secret affair... Or he rails about the plague of pornography, despite his secret life on the internet... These are preachers who promise freedom, but they themselves are trapped in bondage.

"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 saddest person is one who was freed from sin by the power of Jesus, only to revert back to the same sin and get re-entangled in its web.

Peter writes, "the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 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." How tragic. Hear what Peter is saying, it would've been better to have never known a righteous life than to have known it and turned away. Once you take it for granted it causes a certain shame.

Verse 22, "But it has happened to them according to the true proverb (and he quotes Proverbs 26:11): "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." Imagine, a prisoner set free, yet because of his own laziness he commits a crime just to return to the jailhouse since **its easier**... At least in jail he's got a bed and hot meals.

Jesus sets us free from sin, but some Christians are too lazy to add to their faith the spiritual supplements: *virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love*... and they fall right back into the sin from which they were delivered. *It's terrible!*

I've met Christians who sob over the spiritual prison they occupy. But if the truth were known, they're not free because **they don't want to be**... At least not enough to do what it takes to add to their faith!... So in conclusion, *are you ready for this*... Don't be like a hog who after being washed, returns to the spiritual slop. Instead, build a strong faith and never, ever go back!