



LIVING LIFE & BEING GODLY

A STUDY OF 2 PETER 1

We often believe that being godly means that a person can not live a productive or practical life. The view we have is that life demands compromises that either make life a drudgery or godliness useless. Peter who struggled with the realities of these issues, tells us that a meaningful life and a godly life are not mutually exclusive.

Second Peter was written shortly before Peter's death. He references in this book his impending death. Christian tradition places the death of Peter and Paul in the winter of AD 67-68. This corresponds to Paul's request in 2 Timothy for his winter coat when Timothy visits him in Rome. This would place their deaths sometime from December through February. The persecution of Christians ended with the suicide of Nero in June of AD 68.

Sunday School Illustration: Peter and John heal the lame man in the temple.



“A SOLID FOUNDATION” *2 PETER 1:16-21*

With the death of many of the apostles during Nero's persecution and the destruction of many of the Christian Jewish leaders as well and the severing of Christianity from Judaism that took place after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. It would be extremely critical for Christians to have a solid grounding in scripture and the historicity of their faith.

Peter and Paul saw these realities coming for the Christian church and they both tried to prepare believers for the future they would face. The pagan world they face was very much like our own, a world ruled by skepticism and mystical religious experience and thought.

Scripture is like a light in a dark place.



“A SOLID FOUNDATION” *2 PETER 1:16-21*

Pastor Alan’s 2 experiences:

A uncomfortable discussion on a deck. [mid 1980s]

A question on interracial marriage. [later in pastor Alan’s ministry]

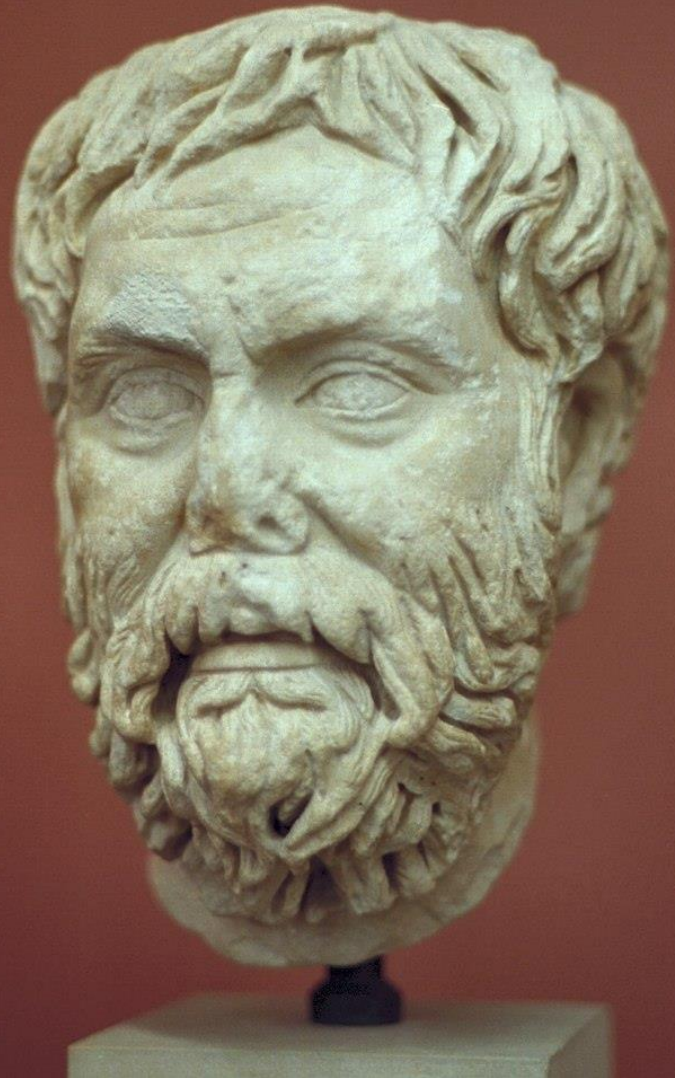
Our faith is not subject to the whims of opinion, emotion, or tradition but to God’s revelation, the light of Truth and correction by the body of Christ.

Scripture is like a light in a dark place.

2 PETER 1:16-21 (ESV)

16 For we did not follow **cleverly devised myths** when we made known to you the **power and coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were **eyewitnesses** of his **majesty**. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the **voice was borne** to him by the **Majestic Glory**, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard **this very voice borne** from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

19 And we have the prophetic word **more fully confirmed**, to which you will do well to **pay attention** as to a lamp shining in a **dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture **comes** from **someone's own interpretation**. 21 For no prophecy was ever **produced** by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along** by the Holy Spirit.



“A SOLID FOUNDATION”

2 PETER 1:16-21

Pyrrho grew up in an educated and wealthy Greek family. He began life as a painter. Turned to philosophy in his late 20s and in his early 30s joined Alexander the Great's army. He studied philosophy with the Magi of Persia and Buddhists of India.

When he returned to Greece he founded a school of philosophical thought called “Pyrrhonism” though never large it had a great deal of influence on Greek philosophy in the 2 centuries before Christ. Pyrrho was the first full skeptic, doubting the existence of absolute truth. *2 Peter 3:1-4*

Philosopher Pyrrho of Elis 360-270 BC. Roman copy of a Greek original

2 PETER 3:1-4 (ESV)

1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

“A SOLID FOUNDATION”

2 PETER 1:16-21

This event was on Peter's mind just before his death. It seems strange that Peter is focused more on the transfiguration than the resurrection. Peter declares that he was an eyewitness to this event. For him it reflects the power and coming of Jesus Christ and his Divine nature. Peter uses the word “majesty” in both verse 16 and 17. In verse 16 he applies it to Jesus and in verse 17 he applies it to the Father. He tells us this “majesty” reflects honor and glory. He interprets that Jesus' transfiguration was a revelation of his Divine nature. He trusts in divine nature to provide the power to transform us. **1 John 3:1-3**



The Transfiguration by James Tissot [Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:27-36].

1 JOHN 3:1-3 [ESV]

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

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. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

“A SOLID FOUNDATION”

2 PETER 1:16-21

Peter had wanted to stay on the mountain to behold the glory and honor of Jesus. But the purpose of Christ is that we live in the world and while we live in the world we have his power to fulfill his mission in the world.

We are called to live our life as Christ called us. Peter quotes the words of the Father about Jesus. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

This phrase is used at Jesus’ baptism as well. It is a reference back to Isaiah 42:1. Peter is reflecting on the verses that follow about the mission of Christ in the world and the glory of God. **Isaiah 42:5-9**



The Transfiguration by James Tissot [Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:27-36].

ISAIAH 42:5-9 [ESV]

5 Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: 6 "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, 7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

8 I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

“A SOLID FOUNDATION”

2 PETER 1:16-21

By the 2nd century serious heresies would creep into the Christian community from the Roman world. Mythology and philosophy would be mixed with Christian doctrine to create these heresies. One of the worst offenders was “Docetism”. Docetism taught that Jesus only appeared to have a physical body and die, but he did not because he was a pure spirit being. There is no physical resurrection only a spiritual apprehension of the spiritual nature through the Christ Spirit. This doctrine was already at work in the church by the end of the 2nd century, John in his letter directly attacks this doctrine.



4th century depiction of Jesus and Peter [below], note the citizen's toga on Christ and the “wand” in his hand.

Docetism was one of the earliest heresies the Christian Church faced. It was a philosophical view that denied the humanity, death and physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. In John's 3 letters: [All passages are from the English Standard Version] – slide 1

- “They (antichrists) went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.” - 1 John 2:19
- “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.” – 1 John 2:22
- “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.”
- 1 John 4:1-3
- “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”
- 1 John 4:15

Docetism was one of the earliest heresies the Christian Church faced. It was a philosophical view that denied the humanity, death and physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. In John's 3 letters: [All passages are from the English Standard Version] – slide 2

- This is he who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. – 1 John 5:6
- For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. - 2 John 1:7

“A SOLID FOUNDATION”

2 PETER 1:16-21

Definition of *myth* from Webster Dictionary online

1a: a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon creation *myths* b: PARABLE, ALLEGORY

2a: a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone *especially*: one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society ... b: an unfounded or false notion

3: a person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence.

4: the whole body of myths [i.e. Greek mythology]



4th century depiction of Jesus and Peter [below], note the citizen's toga on Christ and the “wand” in his hand.

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The Greek word “myth” is used 5 times in the New Testament:

1 Timothy 1:3-4 [ESV] 3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, 4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

1 Timothy 4:6-7 [ESV] 6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;...

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Titus 1:13-15 [ESV] 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.

4th century depiction of Jesus and Peter [below], note the citizen's toga on Christ and the “wand” in his hand.

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2 Timothy 4:1-4 *4 [ESV] 1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

4th century depiction of Jesus and Peter [below], note the citizen's toga on Christ and the "wand" in his hand.

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Ignatius of Antioch was bishop of Antioch, according to Eusebius he was martyred around AD 108 in Rome by Emperor Trajan. On his trip to Rome he wrote 7 letters that we still have. They mention the struggle that the Christian church was going through at the time with Docetic doctrines. He warns Christians against this heresy.

Ignatius likely knew John the Apostle and may have met Peter and Paul in his youth. He reflects on the growing structure of the church as it attempted to protect the body from heretical doctrines.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

A traditional icon of St. Ignatius of Antioch with the lion that were supposed to have killed him in the arena

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17 (ESV)

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

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The modern radical atheist movement is quite belligerent toward Christian faith. It is not enough that they don't believe but they are determined to eliminate Christianity from the culture through exclusion and intimidation. Popular atheists claim that Christians are self-deceived and gullible. On the other hand, we have the rise of New Age beliefs that would substitute a mythological view of spirituality for the real world claims of the Christian faith. They challenge us to see Christianity as another “spiritual path” toward understanding divine nature. We should use mythology and magic to supplement our understanding of ourselves and accomplish salvation through enlightenment.



Peter as an old man by James Tissot

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So, we are often told that we are following fables. What Skeptics [Atheists and Agnostics] and New Age faiths share is a belief that there are no Absolute truths. Many cultural observers believe we, in Europe and America, live in a post-Christian era. Among a growing number in our society the resurrection is a myth that only foolish people would believe. I am surprised how much like the Roman culture we are becoming. Peter facing death could have easily avoided execution by denying the truth of the gospel, yet he maintained the truth of the gospel. Christianity without scripture dies. Peter and Paul both knew this reality, and they spent their last days trying to ensure Christians were prepared.



Peter as an old man by James Tissot

2 PETER 1:20-21 LITERAL TRANSLATION

20 Knowing this first, that all prophesy of scripture does not exist for private interpretation. *[this statement is expected to be be interpreted in light of the coming statement, verse 21]*

21 For absolutely *[grk-pote]* no prophesy was **produced*** *[carried]* by the will of man *[mankind]*, but holy men of God spoke being **carried*** by the Holy Spirit.

**This Greek word appears in verse 17 “was borne”; verse 18 “borne” and here in verses 20 and 21 it means “to carry”.*



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Pastor Alan’s 2 experiences:

“Christianity without scripture dies; Christianity without history is anemic and unable to stand against the culture.” – ALH 2021

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