

Bible Studies about Peter

Study 14: An Introduction to 2 Peter

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Background

The authorship of the second epistle of Peter ('Petrine' authorship) is disputed despite the introductory sentence of the letter suggesting that it was sent by "*Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.*"¹ This claim to Petrine authorship is reinforced elsewhere in the letter:

- A suggestion that the author was with Jesus at his transfiguration²
- An indication that this is the second such letter that the author had written³

There are other features of the letter which when compared to 1 Peter would also support its authorship by Peter.

Standing against authorship by Peter are aspects including:

- Significant differences in literary style
- Striking similarities between 2 Peter and the letter of Jude

We do know that Silvanus was instrumental in supporting the first epistle of Peter; if Peter had directly written the second epistle without such support it would hardly be surprising that the letters were different.

2 Peter 1:13-14 indicates that the letter was written shortly before Peter's death; the general consensus would suggest that this is likely to have been around 65-66 A.D.

The Message

The letter's primary focus would seem to be discernment of false doctrine and teaching, standing against heresies such as Gnosticism. We have looked at issues with false prophets and teachers in our studies on Discernment and the Fruit of the Spirit. What is of importance to Peter is that believers are genuine in their faith and that they truly understand their calling and election.

Peter presents in 2 Peter 1:5-7 the foundations stones of faith. Much like the discourse we read of in the Sermon on the Mount which includes the Beatitudes which are stepping stones to salvation, Peter here is summarising characteristics of a genuine faith. In verse 8, he goes on to say "*For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"⁴ People may try and define each of these foundation stones in their own right, but without really understanding what they mean and without them pointing to a genuine faith. True faith involves being intimately aware of God's grace and love – and living that grace and love in our lives. We have to recognise that people may hold all of these foundational aspects as being significant yet without professing any faith; they are all noble aspects worthy of pursuit. You might say that people do not pursue godliness, but we know that some Roman Emperors set themselves up as gods in their arrogance failing to

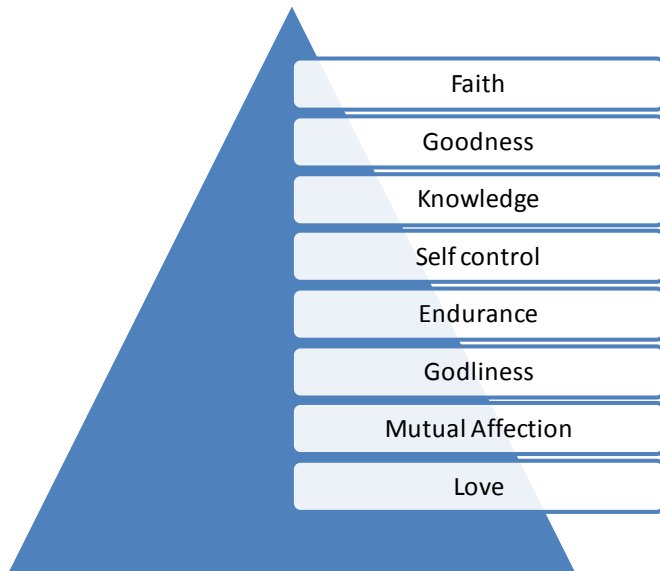
¹ 2 Peter 1:1

² 2 Peter 1:18

³ 2 Peter 3:1

⁴ 2 Peter 1:8

understand what it is to be godly or holy in their lives. And how many people today have twisted this to worship themselves?



Peter's foundations of faith include true knowledge – not the heretical Gnosticism – but the knowledge shaped by our deep experience of God which results in our growth, our development and our transformation. True knowledge is found in the God of Christ and the Scriptures.

Questions

1. What are the things in your life that prevent you from being as effective and fruitful as you could be?
2. Which of the foundations of faith do you struggle with the most and why?
3. What changes could you make in your life to deal with this?
4. How can we recognise false teachers and prophets?