



**THE SECOND
EPISTLE OF
PETER**

AND

JUDE

.....
**LUTHER E.
SCHWARTZKOPF**

**LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY**

Living Way Bible Study, Inc. is an auxiliary of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). All studies are written and/or edited by LCMS pastors. We have been providing studies to churches throughout the U.S. and Canada since 1982.

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*May God bless you as you
walk in His Living Way!*

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*“We found the lessons [2
Peter & Jude] to be inspiring.
We would now like to do
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- 1. PERSONAL** The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS** The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE** The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE** The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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Called to Glory - May 13, 2006

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*“There is great similarity between the two letters
in the purpose for which each was written.”*

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A MANUAL FOR SPIRITUAL FITNESS TRAINING

In the past several decades, the physical fitness movement in our country has grown by leaps and bounds. It has become “big business” all over the world. Even small communities now have “gyms” and aerobic workout centers. Videos and manuals are readily available for people to use within the privacy of their own homes. Physical fitness is important to many people.

The apostle Paul often made references to athletics (2 Timothy 4:7-8). He may very well have been part of a fitness movement. When he wrote to young pastor Timothy, “Physical training is of some value” (2 Timothy 4:8); it was not his intention to “put down” fitness training. What he was saying is: “As important as physical fitness is, there is another kind of fitness which is even more important, and that is godliness.” This has “value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and for the life to come.” Paul is encouraging all Christians to have a clearly defined spiritual training program that we are committed to and participate in regularly.

This concept provides us with a theme around which we may be able to organize the truths, which the Holy Spirit has for us in 2 Peter and Jude. Here we have our God-given: “Manual for Spiritual Fitness Training.”

AUTHOR OF SECOND PETER

In the very first verse of the letter the author says he is “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.” For a variety of reasons, the majority of Bible scholars do not think that the apostle Peter could have been the author of this letter. They believe it was written by a church-man in the 2nd century. He wanted to invoke the authority of the apostle, to help him in dealing with the difficulties and problems confronting the Church then. It would have been his way of saying, “This is what Peter would say if he were here now.”

In spite of the many arguments which are brought forward against the idea that the apostle Peter was the author of this letter, fair-minded scholars will have to admit that this is not “the final answer.” There are still some rather powerful reasons for holding to the idea that the author was indeed, Simon Peter, a disciple of Jesus.

One of these is a recent discovery among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Michael Green calls attention to this “find” in his commentary on 2 Peter, which was published in 1999. Tucked into an ancient manuscript of the Gospel of Mark, scholars have found a fragment, which appears to be a verse from the second letter of Peter (1:15). Considering the relationship between Peter and Mark, some think it may even have been part of a “cover letter” for the Gospel of Mark. If this can be substantiated, it would be, says Green, unimpeachable and very early evidence that 2 Peter was written some time before A.D. 68. This eminent scholar goes on to say: “Nothing has been demonstrated in language, style, or content of 2 Peter which falsifies the claim that it is a mid-first century letter derived from Peter.” We’re on solid ground, then, if we take verse one as it stands and consider Simon Peter as the author.

Peter has outstanding credentials for such a work. With this letter he is doing precisely what His Master charged him to do. In Luke 22:32, Jesus told Peter that it was to be his special ministry to “strengthen” his brothers and sisters in the faith.

ORIGINAL INTENDED READERS OF 2 PETER

In chapter 3:1, Peter writes: “Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you.” If this is a reference to the first epistle of Peter, then we know that it was written to the

churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), which are listed in 1 Peter 1:1. In this reference, Peter goes on to describe the previous one as a “reminder” letter. From the epistle itself we know that the intended recipients are people to whom the author had personally written and ministered (1:16, 3:1) and who had received at least one letter from the apostle Paul (3:15).

Although it is listed with “The General Epistles” of the New Testament, it seems more likely that 2 Peter was written to a particular congregation (or cluster of congregations) about which the author knew that there was a serious problem. This could very well have been in Asia Minor, which was one of the main “seed-beds” for the issues, which the letter takes on. At any rate, there is historical evidence that the letter was received in Asia Minor at an early date.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

There is nothing in the letter that gives us even the slightest hint as to the place from which 2 Peter was sent. Assuming that Simon Peter is the author, then it was very likely written in Rome shortly before his martyrdom (1:15) which happened sometime prior to A.D. 68.

CANONICITY

The record shows that Peter’s second epistle has the dubious distinction of being the last book to gain entry into the New Testament canon. It didn’t happen until the fourth century. The epistle has really had a “rough go of it” down through the centuries. It is not even cited by name until the time of Church Father Origen, at the beginning of the third century. Origen quoted it as Scripture at least six times. Luther considered it “second-rate,” while Erasmus rejected it “out of hand.” On the other hand, there is no positive evidence that it was ever rejected anywhere in the Early Church as “spurious” (i.e., of questionable origin and unworthy of a place in the canon of sacred Scripture). The fact that it was questioned and tested, only adds to the validity of its claim to be an authentic book of the Holy Bible.

PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

The letter is often called “The Epistle of Knowledge.” The word “knowledge” occurs quite often. False teachers were spreading the false notion that as long as one had knowledge of Christian belief, it really didn’t matter how

they lived. Hence, Martin Luther's observation that the letter was "written against those who think that the Christian faith can be without works." In a positive way, it emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the truth for the purpose of strengthening the Christian hope and defending it against the wicked propaganda of false teachers.

AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

In verse one, the author identifies himself as "Jude," which is another form of the Hebrew name for Jacob's fourth son, the founder of the tribe of Judah. The name was quite popular in the New Testament period, but usually in its Greek form, "Judas." The name gained added luster from the Jewish hero Judas Maccabeus who had led the revolt against Antiochus Epiphanies in the second century B.C., and whose exploits are celebrated in the festival of Hanukkah.

The author calls himself, "a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." He doesn't refer to himself as an "Apostle." In fact, in verse 17, he makes it quite clear that he is not one of them. He introduces himself as the "brother of James." There is only one James, who was so well-known at that time, that he could serve as a reference like this, and that is James, the brother of Jesus. James was head of the Jerusalem Church at that time. He was the author of the epistle that bears his name, (Galatians 1:19, 2:9; 1 Corinthians 15:7; James 1:1). Jude, like the other brothers of Jesus, had rejected the Messianic claims of their brother during His earthly ministry (John 7:5). It was after Jesus rose from the dead that they were led by the Holy Spirit to embrace Him as the Promised One.

It is interesting to note that neither James nor Jude ever refer to themselves as "brothers" of Jesus. Perhaps, they considered it privilege enough to be "servants" of Jesus.

OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF JUDE

In verse three, Jude writes that he had intended to write a letter, which would celebrate the great truths and blessings of the Gospel. He was led to postpone this kind of letter because somehow he had learned about a very serious threat to their faith. There were some very influential people in their midst who were coming up with false interpretations of things which the apostle Paul had written. Specifically, they held to the notion that God's grace allowed them to indulge the urges and drives of their human nature. "God likes to forgive; we like to sin — Nice arrangement!"

Jude felt a great urgency to warn them how disastrous it would be for them to accept these ideas. He wanted to show them how they could be not only strong enough to resist, but to be aggressive in doing battle with the proponents of these insidious ideas.

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING

Bible scholars pretty much agreed that because we know so little about the life and work of Jude, it would be pure conjecture to try to reconstruct such details.



The commonly accepted view, which holds that 2 Peter makes use of materials in Jude would require that Jude was written prior to 2 Peter. Accepting our premise that 2 Peter was indeed written by Simon Peter, this would place the date of writing somewhere before A.D. 68, perhaps as early as A.D. 65.

CANONICITY OF JUDE

Although the epistle of Jude is an antilegomena (not wholeheartedly accepted as genuine), biblical history shows that it was incorporated into the earliest official New Testament in the West. By the end of the second century, it was in general circulation in both the East and the West. Early on there were some who questioned Jude's use of apocryphal writings, such as the book of Enoch. One explanation for Jude's use of such materials is the possibility that some of the non-canonical writings were being used by the false teachers.

VALUE OF JUDE FOR TODAY

Jude refutes the very modern careless assumption that a man's beliefs really aren't all that important. Unthought-out religion has an insecure footing, and the body of doctrine that was set forth by the apostles provides a solid foundation for our personal faith today. In contrast to the religious ideas of our postmodernism world in which people are building their own belief system by "picking and choosing," Jude emphasizes the relevance of sound theology for sound morality and true godliness.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 2 PETER AND JUDE

There is a close relationship between 2 Peter and Jude. Of the twenty-five verses in Jude, no less than fifteen appear in whole or in part in 2 Peter. While many insist that Jude used 2 Peter, others feel it is more reasonable to assume that the longer letter incorporated much of the shorter Jude. As far as the lessons taught in both letters, this doesn't really matter.

There is great similarity between the two letters in the purpose for which each was written. Both of them deal with the problem of false religious ideas which were being promoted very aggressively and which could undermine the faith of the people and bring them to spiritual ruin. Both of them are aimed to help ordinary people of God become morally fit and spiritually strong. Spiritually healthy people will develop internal resistance to the virus of false teachings. They will be enabled to live spiritually vigorous lives to the glory of God. Both letters sound a clarion call to that generation of believers and to ours, that what you believe and how you live are vitally important.

Simon Peter, the apostle, and Jude, the brother of Jesus, have given us a manual for moral and spiritual fitness loaded with tried and true principles that we will do well to study and then put into practice as we seek to live our lives to the glory of our God and Savior. The Holy Spirit invites you to become part of this moral and spiritual strength and fitness training. Resolve to put your heart and soul into it. It offers tremendous benefits for this life and for all eternity! To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen!

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 1:1-11

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your Holy Word, especially for the Gospel which tells me about all You have already done for me through Jesus. Through the working of the Holy Spirit in my heart and mind, please make it come alive for me as I study it today. May it inform, inspire, and enable me to live a life that honors You in every way. Amen.

.....

2 Peter 1:1

1. In addition to being “a servant and an apostle,” what else gave Peter special qualifications for writing a manual for “Spiritual Fitness Training”? (Lesson 1 and Luke 22:32)

What does the nickname that Jesus gave Peter mean in English (John 1:42; Matthew 16:18)? Do you think he “lived up” to it?

When Peter lists his credentials he puts “servant” first. Why do you think he does this?

What important religious truth did Peter illustrate by identifying himself as a “slave”? (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Romans 6:22)

Does this apply only to Peter? Explain.

Does this “slave” metaphor suggest that we ought to be ready to serve God because we have an obligation to do so?

What is the only motivation acceptable to God?

In his television special, “The Search for Jesus,” Peter Jennings interviewed so-called scholars who said that the concept of Jesus’ deity was a later development. What do you see in verse 1 which disproves this?

2 Peter 1:2

2. List the personal benefits which will be ours if we embark on a program to become more spiritually fit.

Using the dictionary, pick a definition of “grace” which you think comes closest to what Peter had in mind.

Write the Hebrew word for “peace.”

2 Peter 1:3-4

3. If our response to Peter’s challenge is that we just don’t think we’ve “got it in us” to live spiritually strong lives, what does he say to us?
-

What other encouragement does he offer? (v. 4)

2 Peter 1:5-9

4. A servant relationship with God begins when we receive by faith His gift of forgiveness through Jesus Christ, which brings us the hope of eternal life in heaven. Is this all there is to the Christian life? Peter says: “_____ to your faith.” Which words (v. 5 NIV) show how important Peter considers this?
-

Compare other versions to see how they translate his exhortation to make this a priority. Make note of any that you think express Peter’s sense of urgency in a more powerful way.

Peter lists seven personal qualities we should seek to cultivate. Match the list with the names of people who demonstrated the virtue in an outstanding way.

___ Goodness	A. Genesis 39:1-20
___ Knowledge	B. Luke 23:34
___ Self-Control	C. John 1:47
___ Perseverance	D. 1 Kings 3:9
___ Godliness	E. Acts 4:32ff
___ Kindness	F. Acts 7:54ff
___ Love	G. 1 Samuel 3:4-10

According to verse 8, what encouragement does Peter give to those who make a determined effort to develop such qualities and make them more evident in their lives?

2 Peter 1:10-11

5. When Peter urges “...be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure,” is he implying that there is something left for us to do, before we can be sure that we are saved? How does the rest of verse 10 help you to understand what he meant?
-

What is the final incentive (v. 11) Peter gives them for making every effort to “add” these seven qualities and characteristics (vv. 5-9) to their faith?

THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS – 2 PETER 1:2	8
WE HAVE MORE THAN ADEQUATE RESOURCES! – 2 PETER 1:3-4	9
SPECIFIC AREAS OF PERSONALITY TO WORK ON – 2 PETER 1:5-9	9
IT'S DECISION TIME! – 2 PETER 1:10-11	10
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 1:12-21	11

• • • • •
“You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

• • • • •
THEME: “GOD EXPECTS US TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND FITNESS”

WE SHOULD LISTEN TO PETER!

2 PETER 1:1

Peter explains why he is “in the business” of promoting moral and spiritual fitness. He calls himself “a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.” These are his credentials for his role as spiritual “fitness trainer.” He is an apostle, schooled by the Master Himself.

LIKE PETER, WE BELONG TO GOD

More important for Peter was the title “servant.” The word for “servant” (doulos) refers more specifically to the role of a slave, a person who belonged “body and soul” to his master, who had “paid a price” for him (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 6:20). When he refers to himself as a “slave,” Peter also wants to identify with his readers. All believers have this in common with the apostles and all the great heroes of the Christian faith. All of us belong to God because He paid a price for us. The price He paid wasn't gold or silver, but His Son's “holy precious blood.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

WE HAVE POTENTIAL FOR TRUE SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Peter continues, “To those who... have received a faith as precious as ours.” With this greeting the apostle Peter says, that in this spiritual quest, it's a “level playing field” for all participants - the apostle included! With the Greek word which he uses for “precious,” he points to another important concept. This word was associated with the civil ceremony in which newly-freed slaves were granted full citizenship. In one sense we are slaves, but by God's grace we are first-class citizens in His Kingdom. He has set us free to serve Him.

All of this, says Peter, is ours “because of the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Because of what God has done for us in Jesus, we have the potential to develop a spirituality that is acceptable to our God. This statement makes crystal clear what our reason for wanting to please God should be. Our motive should not be to try to win God’s favor with our fine performance. Because of His fine performance we already have God’s favor. It is because of our love for Him “who first loved us” that we are concerned about our spiritual health and well-being. This is the only motive that is acceptable to God.

Incidentally, we don’t want to miss the significant nuance which Peter includes in his reference to Jesus. He boldly takes the Old Testament name for Yahweh and applies it to Jesus. The deity was taught from the beginning!

THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS

2 PETER 1:2

Fitness “buffs” like to talk about the personal benefits they receive. Peter knows from personal experience that spiritual fitness brings the blessings of “grace and peace.” It was his hope and prayer that this will happen for them “in abundance!” “Grace” usually refers to God’s disposition of undeserved love for people, which moved Him to work out a plan of salvation and offer it to all people, even though they are in no way deserving of it (Romans 5:8). Spiritually fit people will “catch” this God-like love. It will enable them to “do away” with the sins others commit against them, as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. In this way, they can keep themselves free from the usual destructive emotions of resentment and hatred and be able to concentrate on doing the will of God.

The gift of grace is essential before they can experience the blessing of “peace.” The word “peace” is a translation for the Hebrew “Shalom.” To get a little deeper into the profound meaning of “Shalom,” think of a fine Swiss watch. The skilled watchmaker carefully assembles the finely crafted parts so that they function in perfect harmony. “Shalom” is that state in which a child of God has all of the complicated components of human personality functioning smoothly and in total harmony with God, giving the individual a deep sense of direction and purpose. What a great blessing that is!

BOTH DEPEND UPON A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD!

Unlike the other world religions, which use a variety of rituals and ceremonies through which their followers hope to attain such blessings, Peter says that “grace and peace” can be ours only “through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.” It is very likely Peter used the word “knowledge” because it was a “buzz-word” among the false teachers. Peter says: “Yes, the secret of true spirituality is knowledge — the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.” For Peter, the word “knowledge” meant more than just knowing information about God. It meant to “know” God and Jesus Christ in an intimate and personal way. For this, we need to spend “quality time” with the Word and Sacrament, through which He personally comes to us and becomes a powerful force in our life.

WE HAVE MORE THAN ADEQUATE RESOURCES!*2 PETER 1:3-4*

Peter writes (v. 3): “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life and through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” The “divine call” is the basis for Peter’s appeal for godly living. He declares that the One, who calls, also enables. Because of our calling, the way is open for us to develop and grow in “true godliness and to participate in the divine nature of God.” He wants all of us to be involved in living our lives as He had in mind with His creation. He wants to see us restored into the very “image” of Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). What He expects of us, He also makes possible. Peter says God will give us all the help we need in this endeavor.

WE ALSO HAVE HIS PROMISES!

Not only do we have the resources we need for this exciting challenge, Peter tells us that Christ has also given us “great and precious promises.” One of them (Matthew 28:20) says He will be with us every step of the way. Isn’t that good news? The devil, the world and our sinful inclinations conspire to throw us off track and divert us from the primary purpose for which God has called us. Peter uses the word “escape” when he speaks about our vulnerability to the “corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (v. 4). The word “escape” aptly depicts the process of temptation to sin. The forces of evil are very aggressive. Yet, with God-given determination and the spiritual strength God supplies, we will make progress in the exciting venture to be “walking reflections” of God.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF PERSONALITY TO WORK ON*2 PETER 1:5-9*

Peter uses the popular literary form of a list to highlight seven areas of character and behavior, which we should focus on; like body-builders work on certain muscle groups. He introduces the list with very strong words about their importance. He says, “Make every effort.” The godly life is not something we will just drift into without any real effort on our part. As “people of faith” we are to be as focused, determined, and single-minded as Olympic athletes. We need to strive with all that is in us to make it our “personal best” in the arena of life under the banner of God’s Kingdom (Philippians 2:12-13).

At the head of the list is “goodness” (Greek - “aretee”). Literally, the word meant the “proper fulfilling of anything.” For example, a knife is meant to cut. It is a “good” knife if it cuts well. Similarly, a horse is supposed to run. It is a “good” horse if it runs well. Our life on this earth will be “good” if it is a reflection of the very nature of God. He created us to be in His “image” and shows us, in the person of Jesus, what that means.

Next, Peter lists “knowledge.” “Knowledge” deals with the intellectual aspect of our human make-up. The Christian life is not a “no-brainer.” It takes time and effort to use our mental capacities to seek out the will of God as we make our choices in today’s complicated world.

High on the list is the virtue of “self-control.” It means controlling our drives and passions instead of being controlled by them. Peter uses a concept which must have cut the false teachers like the lash of a whip. The chief item in their propaganda was that their “special knowledge” released them from the need for self-control (2:10, 3:3). “Self-control” does not mean that “people of faith” are to disown or suppress the reality of all passion and pleasure. Rather, it actually authenticates these drives as God-given. God included them in His pronouncement that all He had created was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). They can be a blessing to us, and even support us in our Christian life, but only when they are under control and in keeping with God’s will.

Another quality of the “good life” is perseverance. On this topic the author of Hebrews writes (Hebrews 12:1-2), “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame.” The same word was also used to describe the spirit of the Christian martyrs who remained unswerving in their loyalty to God and His will, even as they felt the searing flames at their feet, ready to turn their bodies into flaming torches to illuminate Roman games. This perseverance had its roots in the conviction that their God is ultimately in control and He will “have the last word!”

The Greek word for “godliness” is the primary word for “religion” in popular pagan usage. The “religious” person is always careful to appear as one who respects the rituals

and rules of divinity. Peter takes great pains to emphasize that true “knowledge” shows itself in a genuine reverence toward God and great respect for fellow human beings. The false teachers taught that their secret knowledge enabled them to live as they pleased without any concern for the effect it would have on others. Peter reminds us that our relationship with God also has to do with how we relate to those with whom we are sharing this short trip on planet earth (Mark 12:28-31).

As Peter comes close to the end of his list, you can sense that he is building up to a climax. The Greek word he used is the same word which Wm. Penn picked for the city he founded, Philadelphia. He wanted it to be a city of “brotherly (sisterly) love.” Without this basic attitude of love and kindness, true godliness will be stunted. The apostle John couldn’t have said it any more precisely: “If someone says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20). This is a simple “litmus test” anyone of us can use to check the genuineness of our religion.

The six prior qualities are consummated in the seventh: Love. The word for love is the familiar Greek: “agape.” The concept embodied in the word is that of unconditional love and concern for the well being of those who touch our life to one degree or another. Although emotion is involved, it is primarily an over-riding principle which guides our behavior. Without this we will fail at being a reflection of God, because this is the very essence of God (1 John 4:8).

Peter makes the point (v. 8) that if we will work at doing the things that encourage growth and improvement in these areas, we can’t help but come closer to the goals God has in mind for us. On the other hand, he adds that failure to give these priority in our life would show that we have really “missed the boat” about the meaning of the Christian life. In verse 9 he says that we would be “short-sighted, blind, or forgetful.”

IT’S DECISION TIME!

2 PETER 1:10-11

The last two verses (10-11) in this opening section are Peter’s appeal for his readers to stop being spiritual “couch potatoes” and make a commitment to this “spiritual strength training” program. The word “therefore” has the force of saying: In the light of these preceding truths, is there any good reason why you shouldn’t give top priority to these things? The question is hypothetical.

Peter gives additional incentives. He tells them that if they respond to his encouraging words they will make their “calling and election sure.” This seems to be saying that there is something left for us to do before we can be sure that we have been saved. We know that this simply can’t be true. Once again, the original gets us closer to Peter’s intended meaning. The Greek word for “make sure” is a legal term which means “to validate.” When we live a life that reflects the nature of God, it shows that our religion is authentic and genuine! We not only claim to be children of God, we actually reflect the nature of our heavenly Father. Furthermore, says Peter, the person who is spiritually “in good shape, will be less likely to stumble or be tripped up by the devious ways of Satan.”

Peter wraps it up by calling to mind another exciting blessing they can look forward to: “You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The metaphor of “entry into the kingdom” may go back to one of the honors paid to a victor in the Olympic Games. The people of his home-town welcomed him back not through the usual town gate, but through a part of the wall especially broken through to afford him entrance! People who are victorious in living their lives to the glory of God can know when their life on earth is done, a great eternity awaits them (Revelation 2:10).

Don’t put off getting enrolled in this fitness program which will give direction and purpose to your life here on this earth, result in spiritual health and strength, and bring promise of wonderful eternal blessings.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 1:12-21

Lord God in Heaven, please help me to have a clear realization of the truth that my life on this earth is not only temporary, but that it could come to an end without warning. Help me then to give top priority to preparing for the life which I know goes on forever. Through Jesus Christ, my Savior. Amen.

Review

1. In our previous study, we looked at the “pep talk” with which Peter began this letter (vv. 1-11). What was he trying to motivate them to do (v. 10)?

What is the special blessing he points to (v. 11) as a powerful incentive to do this?

Do you think this could still be a powerful incentive for Christians today? Why or why not?

Does it work for you? Explain.

2 Peter 1:12

2. Do you have moments when you wonder about the value of regular participation in worship and Bible class?

Do you see anything in verse 12 which might be helpful for you at times like this?

Complete this sentence: “I want to hear God’s Word over and over again because

2 Peter 1:13-15

3. Peter speaks about his impending death. How did he know he would die soon?

To what does he compare his physical body (NIV)?

What does this tell us about his view of life?

What does it say about his view of death?

What effect did his impending death have on Peter in terms of what he considered important to be doing in the days he had left?

Is there a lesson for us here?

The Greek translated “departure” in verse 15 is “exodus.” How is death for the believer like the original EXODUS?

2 Peter 1:16-18

4. What climactic future event does Peter say he had told them about?

What actual event in his life as a disciple does Peter refer to here which gives authenticity to the message?

Can you think of a special reason that Jesus arranged to have this dramatic disclosure take place for Peter and the rest of the disciples just a few days before Holy Week?

5. Matthew’s account (17:1-9) mentions the “bright cloud” from which came the voice of the Father. What is the significance of this? (If you have a concordance, check the other references for cloud.)

2 Peter 1:19

6. What does Peter say the spectacular experience of The Transfiguration did for him with regard to his view of Holy Scripture?

At this time, where would the people find the “word of the prophets”?

Do you sometimes wish God would give you a special vision or spectacular experience to make you a little more certain about your faith?

What was Jesus’ opinion about this as expressed in His Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus? (Luke 16:19-31)

To what does Peter compare the Holy Scripture?

What do you suppose is the meaning of the imagery?

2 Peter 1:20-21

7. In these verses Peter gives the basis for his complete confidence in the dependability of Scriptures. What does this rule out in verse 20-21a?

Although the prophets set forth God's revelations in their own style and vocabulary, who was vitally active in the entire process?

How does Paul say the same thing in 2 Timothy 3:16?

LESSON 3 2 PETER & JUDE

2 PETER 1:12-21

THEIR EXPOSURE TO THE “VIRUS” OF FALSE TEACHING 2 PETER 1:12	15
THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE ADDS TO THE URGENCY 2 PETER 1:13-15	15
THE CERTAINTY OF THE SECOND COMING 2 PETER 1:16-17	15
THE TRANSFIGURATION — GOD’S AUDIO-VISUAL 2 PETER 1:17-18	16
THE SCRIPTURES—OUR SOLID BASIS FOR TRUTH 2 PETER 1:19-21	17
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 2:1-9	18

• • •
“For spiritual health and strength, Peter recommends a personal regimen which includes regular intake of energy which the Spirit makes available for us in God’s Word, a diet of real ‘Soul Food.’”

• • •
THEME: “THE IMPORTANCE OF REPETITION AND GOOD SOUL FOOD”

During the Olympics, we are reminded of the intensive regimen of training that these superb athletes put themselves through for many months leading up to the games. Divers and gymnasts repeat the same routines over and over again — sometimes for eight or nine hours a day. Repetition! Repetition!

In this section, Peter emphasizes the importance of repetition in connection with our quest for spiritual fitness. He had given them a list of seven spiritual “muscle groups” to focus on (1:5-7). They would need to work on these regularly if they ever hoped to progress in their quest to be the kind of people God wanted them to be.

THE URGENCY OF THIS ADVICE

2 PETER 1:12-15

Peter explains why he had taken such great pains to go through this program step by step. He displays his trust in them by acknowledging, up front, that they already know this very well (v.12). Then he makes

the point that this is something they can't be reminded of too often. Anyone who cares about physical health and fitness knows that haphazard stabs at fitness "just don't cut it." It has to be a way of life!

THEIR EXPOSURE TO THE "VIRUS" OF FALSE TEACHING

2 PETER 1:12

Peter knows that his readers are being exposed to insidious and dangerous religious ideas. False teachers were promoting the idea that God's grace gave them the license to live as they pleased. His readers needed to know how disastrous it would be for them if they succumbed to the debilitating false teachings. He also wanted to make sure that they had a good understanding of what they could do to build up their resistance to this deadly "virus" and stay spiritually healthy.

Peter's words sound a solemn warning to all of us. It is all too easy, for those of us who have been Christians as long as we can remember to drift into an attitude of complacency. In that state, we become "sitting ducks" for those who manipulate Bible truths to suit their pre-conceived ideas. Aggressive cults, such as Jehovah's Witness and Mormonism, can lead ungrounded Christians on paths that take them away from basic Bible teachings.

Ultimately, they will deny the deity of Christ and nullify the atoning work of Jesus on the Cross. The only personal safeguard against this is for them to make a consistent effort to stay with the program, which is able to establish them in true spiritual fitness!

THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE ADDS TO THE URGENCY

2 PETER 1:13-15

It is a spiritually strong Peter who writes that he considers it of compelling urgency that he brings this reminder and warning at this time. His sense of responsibility was heightened, he explains, because God had told him he would soon die. He eased into the topic of his imminent demise with a general statement which clearly reflects his view of death. He referred to transiency of his life on earth as living in the "tent of this body." This picture may have been a deliberate tie-in with the journeys of the patriarchs of the Old Testament. They had no permanent homes.

They were on their way to The Promised Land. The very first name for Christians was people of "The Way" (Acts 9:2). They were people who followed Jesus, who is "The Way" to the Promised Land.

I have heard grief counselors say that along with expressions like "passing on" or "going home" this concept is just a euphemism to help people cope with the reality of death. To the contrary, as far as Peter was concerned, this metaphor points to the true reality. It reminds us, too, that our existence on earth is only temporary. Someone has pointed out, that for our generation; death has replaced sex as a forbidden topic. The fact is that the person, who has not factored death into his equation of life, is not really prepared for life itself.

Peter's sensitivity to the transitory nature of his life on earth was heightened by the knowledge that his "tent" would soon be set aside. Some say that Peter may have been thinking about the statement made in John 21:18-19 where Jesus prophesied a drastic end to Peter's life by crucifixion. Surely this must have been in the back of his mind. The words, "as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me," seem to refer to a special revelation received only recently.

In verse 15, Peter refers to his death with another figure of speech. He calls it "my departure." He uses the familiar Greek word: "exodus." This immediately calls to mind the journey of Israel to the Promised Land. Peter likely found the concept very appropriate for describing how he felt at the end of his own pilgrimage. Not a bad way to picture what happens when we die!

Peter says that before his "exodus," he is going to do whatever he can to make sure that after he is gone they "will always be able to remember these things." He probably meant that through strong emphasis and repetition his message would be written indelibly in their minds and always be in the forefront of their thinking.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE SECOND COMING

2 PETER 1:16-17

In contrast to the impermanence of our sojourn on earth, Peter emphasizes the certainty of the "power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 16). The Second Coming of

Jesus would introduce the final chapter in God's great plan of salvation. Peter and the other apostles considered this the culmination of everything that had gone on before. It is without question the centerpiece of Peter's message. The false teachers, on the other hand, insisted that the Second Coming, along with the Incarnation and the Resurrection were simply myths, or "cleverly invented stories."

THE TRANSFIGURATION — GOD'S AUDIO-VISUAL

2 PETER 1:17-18

In his defense, Peter uses their word and declares that he did not use "cleverly invented stories." The teaching about the "coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ," has its basis in an actual historical event: "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty." Note that throughout this passage Peter uses the plural pronoun "we." This strikes at the false teachers' claim that Peter might have been dreaming or hallucinating. In Peter, James, and John, the glorious event of "The Transfiguration" had more than the legally required eyewitnesses attesting to the reality of an event (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16).

There may have been a special reason that Peter chose "epoptai" as his word for "eyewitnesses." This is the only place in the New Testament where it is found. It was commonly used to denote a person who was being initiated into the "mystery religions." The ceremony informed them that they now "had their eyes opened." Peter uses one of their favorite words to make the point that he and the other disciples had their "eyes opened" to something really grand that day!

Their eyes were opened to see the "true majesty" of Jesus (v. 16). Peter doesn't recount all of the details of the Transfiguration; however, in verse 18, he does lift out the key point for the message of this letter. He mentions the "voice which came to him [Jesus] from the Majestic Glory." This is Peter's term for the "bright cloud" of the accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke. For people of Jewish background, the "bright cloud" was just another way of saying: "God is present!" (Exodus 24:17; Numbers 14:10; Ezekiel 1:4).

For clarification, as well as for emphasis, Peter identifies the voice that came from the "bright cloud" as the voice of "God the Father." All by itself, the majestic bright cloud must have been mind-boggling for the disciples. How even more exciting and dramatic it must have been for them to hear this voice (a thousand times richer than actor James Earl Jones!) reverberating across the heavens: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." The voice of God the Father gave unqualified endorsement to the claims of Jesus. The term "beloved one" was one of the early titles for the Messiah. The phrase "with whom I am well pleased" could be considered a rough translation of Isaiah 42:1 and gives us another title for the Messiah.

This "Transfiguration" was an experience which would remain indelibly impressed in their minds, as Jesus had intended it to do. It happened only a few days before the earth-shaking events of Holy Week. This personal

experience would still be firmly imbedded in their psyches as they were rocked to the very core of their beings by the horrible things that people, under the influence of Satan, did to their Lord. We know how frightened they were, with minds in turmoil, after the events of Good Friday. However, when they saw their Risen Lord on Sunday that scene on the Mount of Transfiguration must have done an “instant replay” in their conscious minds. Without hesitation they recognized Him for Who He was! They fell on their knees and worshiped Him as God.

In addition to impressing upon the disciples the truth about Jesus’ divinity, The Transfiguration also pointed to the “Parousia” or the Second Coming, when a similar scene will take place (Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:7). There will be no doubt in anyone’s mind about Christ’s identity then! You and I don’t have to wait until then when it is too late! We have the unimpeachable testimony of Peter and the rest of the disciples as a solid foundation for our faith.

THE SCRIPTURES—OUR SOLID BASIS FOR TRUTH 2 PETER 1:19-21

As powerful and impressive as the disciples’ experience of The Transfiguration was for them (and can be also for us), Peter has something else to say: “And we have the word of the prophets made more sure” (v. 19a). Some interpret this to mean that the Transfiguration experience somehow corroborates the prophecies of the Old Testament. In the light of what he writes in the rest of this paragraph, Peter is really saying that we already have, in the Holy Scriptures, a very reliable source of truth: “You will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place” (v. 19b).

This suggests the idea that our life on this earth is a journey. We are surrounded by spiritual darkness. God has graciously provided us with a powerful light which can guide us safely through it - His Holy Scriptures. We should let the whole course of our life be guided by what God tells us in His Word. If we use it for guidance, warning, reproof and inspiration we won’t get tripped up or follow the wrong path. We will reach the Promised Land, where we will spend a blessed eternity with our God and with loved ones who have gone ahead.

This will need to be our daily concern, Peter says, “until

the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” When Peter uses the term “Day” it is obviously a reference to the “Parousia” or the Day of our Lord’s Second Coming. Only then will we no longer need the light of the Word. Then the “Morning Star” will rise in our hearts. Most often, the “Morning Star” is thought to be the planet Venus. At certain times of the year it “rises” in the eastern sky and is still visible for a time after sunrise. When John the Baptist’s father, Zechariah, got his “tongue back” he praised God with a song which we call “Benedictus” (Luke 1:67-79). In the “Benedictus” he made reference to the coming Messiah, by using similar imagery. He calls Him “the rising sun from heaven” (v. 78). As the sun rises in the morning sky and gives life to the world, so the “Son” will come from the heavens and usher in the new endless “day” of life eternal for all who look to Him.

However, until that time comes, they (we) have the Holy Scriptures to light the way and bring spiritual life and health. Once again, Peter seizes the opportunity to stress the value of God’s Word. He gives his reason for such utmost confidence. “You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation” (v. 20). God had His hand even in the phase of how the Scriptures “came about.” God saw to it that they selected the precise words to express the ideas which God put into their minds. However, they were not robots. The truth which God revealed through their words still reflected their human personalities and personal style which they expressed in the linguistics of their time and place in history.

Yet, Peter says in verse 21, its essence came from God: “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.” Here Peter uses a fascinating metaphor from ships of the sea. It suggests the scenario of the prophets raising their sails for the Holy Spirit to fill them and carry the craft of their minds along the direction He wished. The result was unquestionably the truth which God wanted to share with His people in words and symbolism which they could readily understand.

For spiritual health and strength, Peter recommends a personal regimen which includes regular intake of energy which the Spirit makes available for us in God’s Word, a diet of real “Soul Food.”