

Study Guide for II Peter

by

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How to Use This Study Guide

Study Guide For II Peter is designed to be especially helpful in connection with Dr. Gutzke's teaching of this subject on radio or tape recordings. However, this Guide may also serve as a profitable basis for other individual, group or class study.

In using this Guide, first read through the articles. Next familiarize yourself with the "Outline of Thought," perhaps reading rapidly through I Peter at the same time, noting where we have made the divisions in our outline. Finally, proceed with the "Study Questions," one section at a time.

If you are coordinating this study with Dr. Gutzke's teaching on radio, you can work ahead of him and then check your answers and ideas against what he says. Or, you can jot down notes as he teaches. Or, you can summarize in your own words under each question after Dr. Gutzke has completed his teaching.

The purpose of the questions is to re-inforce your learning by getting you to summarize the teaching and write it down in your own words. You will then know the material better, understand it more thoroughly, and have it fixed in your memory. We have no set of "correct answers" for you. The object of the questions is to stimulate your thinking while letting God speak to your heart. Approach each time of study both in prayer and in faith.

You will be blessed as you use this study guide . . . in direct proportion to your own active participation.

Organize A Study Group

Why not share this study with others? We recommend that you find 8-12 persons who are interested in Bible study. Your group could plan to meet once each week or every other week in homes. Where it is possible to hear the studies by Dr. Gutzke on radio, urge each member of your group to listen faithfully and to take notes of Dr. Gutzke's comments, their own impressions and ways of applying the truths of Scripture.

After having heard Dr. Gutzke present his study of the section, with each person taking notes, let the group go over the passage together and answer the "study questions." Encourage each member to join in the discussion and to share matters from his own personal study and notes. Give a time for consideration of personal applications. Close with a period of group prayer.

Make your sessions informal but in order. Have some refreshments as you come together each time. Set a time limit on each meeting. We suggest an hour and a half. Encourage faithful attendance. Be considerate of your host and of one another.

When a group has a clear sense of purpose and calling in the Lord, it will provide added blessing and growth. Pray together for this. And members of your original group, after a time, may want to start additional groups so that the study may multiply. Whenever average attendance exceeds 12, plan to divide into two groups.

The Nature and Purpose of the New Testament Epistles

The Epistles of the New Testament are written to believers in Christ to explain the implications and the applications of the salvation provided by the Lord Jesus Christ. *Living in the Spirit* is quite different from *living in the flesh*. The natural man learns to live in this world of earthly things by *seeing* the phenomena of nature, whereas the spiritual man learns to live in the world of heavenly things by *understanding* the principles of Grace. *Walking by faith* involves different techniques than *walking by sight*.

Salvation is a term with meaning as wide and even more profound than *creation*. Just as every child must learn how to live in the natural world of creation, so must every regenerated person learn how to live in the spiritual world of salvation. The Epistles are designed to help the Christian grow in grace and knowledge "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

The Epistles are written to persons who have been born again. Hence they do not deal with such problems as the existence or nature of God, the birth, life or crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the account of Pentecost, etc. Each Epistle reads as though it was addressed to everybody. Yet, there is usually a clear indication, in the salutation or in the body of the Epistle, that the writer was specifically addressing believers. Within the group of believers, the writer addressed everybody.

The readers are not told how to be saved, but rather how to live if they are saved. The Epistles do not dwell on the fate of the lost. That is referred to, but it is not the main topic under consideration. The Epistles do not present dire warnings calculated to move men to serve the Lord from the standpoint of fear, but they remind the readers of what Christ has done for them, and they point out what He is doing *now* and what He *will do* for them by way of stirring up their "pure minds by way of remembrance." The Epistles are written to willing hearts to guide, exhort, comfort and encourage them to continue and prosper in believing the gospel.

The Epistles are written from the point of view of certain promises. The readers are considered to be persons who once were sinners, but who have "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven." Being born again, they are counted as having the new nature of eternal life within them, and thus now having two natures: an "old man" experienced in, addicted to, and corrupted by sin, and a "new man" begotten of the Word and the Spirit.

Believers are reckoned as being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. What is written to them is commended to their hearts with the confidence that they will recognize, admit, accept, obey, cherish and cling to the truth of the gospel; the Holy Spirit is there to illuminate, to show, to energize and to guide their own thinking and doing. They are classified as "strangers and pilgrims" upon the earth, "sojourners" passing through this changing temporary scene, whose "citizenship is in heaven." They are referred to as sitting "together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus," being "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Their destiny is dwelt upon with joyful assurance: they are to be with the Lord, "without spot or wrinkle," "conformed to the image of his Son." The Epistles do not speak of these things as desirable possibilities to be chosen, but as glorious facts already established in the believers' relationship in Christ Jesus.

The Epistles are written with the perspective of "living in the Lord." Reference is made to "them that are without." But even such references are addressed to those who are "in the Lord." There is no analysis of the problems of living as faced by the natural man. The Epistles treat the problems of living as these arise in the course of *spiritual* living. There is no discussion of the affairs of state or society. There is no evaluation of policies or programs as promoted by the people at large. The Christian is instructed how to conduct himself in this present world, but no message is addressed to this world, nor to the leaders of this world.

The Epistles are definitely a manual for those who are "walking by faith," who look not at the

things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. There are words of comfort and instruction to souls who endure "as seeing him who is invisible." The values they cherish are heavenly values derived from spiritual relationship with the living Lord. The principles they follow are implied in the living will of the eternal God. The strength they count on is the strength of the Lord. The typical formula which serves as a characteristic pattern for every discussion is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Salvation is the work of God in man through Jesus Christ. It is indicated to man by promises in the Word of God. It is experienced or realized by the man who believes, and this is the operation of the power of God through the Holy Spirit. God is holy. Man is sinful. Christ Jesus is the mediating Savior who achieved man's reconciliation to God by His death on the Cross, and secured man's deliverance by His resurrection from the dead. What God will do for "whosoever believeth in him," is set forth in His promises, which are "Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus." These are the "exceeding great and precious promises" by which believers become "partakers of the divine nature." The formative rule in all salvation is "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). The more one understands about the promises, the more one can believe: the more one believes, the more one can receive.

The Epistles speak of being "renewed in the spirit of your mind," and of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind." Under the Old Covenant where consequences following conduct were appraised in judgment, it was the fear of the Lord that was the beginning of wisdom. Under the New Covenant, where promises preceding conduct are freely given in grace, it is the faith in Christ that is the way to all blessing.

Evangelism, in its announcement of the promises and its exhortation addressed to the heart and mind of man, culminates in the soul accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. But this is not the end of Scriptural instruction. Rather, it is the beginning, just as it is the beginning of "living in Christ." The natural mind conceives of "becoming a Christian" as a sort of exit, a sort of last step which, as a matter of fact, accounts for the natural inclination to put it off as long as possible. The spiritual mind, as set forth in the Epistles, conceives of this matter of becoming a Christian as an entrance, a first step. This accounts for the spiritual urgency to take it up as soon as possible: "Now is the time, today is the day of salvation."

Both of these attitudes indicate a great truth. Accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, as set forth in the gospel, is the *exit* of the natural, just as it is the entrance of the spiritual.

Believers live in the New Creation. Every man in Christ is "a new creature." The Scriptures teach that God creates and sustains by His Word. This was true in the first creation when "God spake" and "it stood fast." It is likewise true in the New Creation: the Word of God has creative and sustaining power. The minister of the gospel, who preaches the Word, is a "co-laborer with God." Something vital happens when a believer sees or understands the truth in Christ: he is changed from glory to glory into the same image "as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus, in writing his Epistles, Paul was continuing his function as "a wise master builder." To read and to study the Epistles is to put oneself into the hands of God to be made, shaped, and fashioned into the likeness of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.

What II Peter Is About

There are a number of "second" epistles or letters in the New Testament. This implies for the Christian that there are things to be learned after you have "begun"! These second letters throughout can be seen not only to provide further instruction but also to add a note of stern warning. This is true of II Peter. I Peter is a wonderful exposition of "the true grace of God wherein ye stand." II Peter tells how to culture the grace of God in you, while warning about false and therefore barren or unfruitful teaching.

Living in Christ begins in the new birth. It develops in growth and maturity into the stature of the fullness of Christ. This is that stage of perfection (of full grown maturity) that is commonly spoken of as the stage of fruit-bearing. This stage of life needs attention as from a husbandman, one responsible for care and cultivation. James sets out various applications of the pruning function of the truth through the analyzing and exposing of unfruitful practices. He desires that the believer might deliberately eliminate such. The Epistle to the Hebrews focuses attention upon the present priestly ministry of Christ and the implications of the New Covenant of grace to nourish and strengthen the faith that produces fruit. The Second Epistle of Peter is addressed to another problem in this same phase of Christian experience.

The mature Christian lives as a member of the Body of Christ. The spiritual life and health of the Church is advanced by the ministry of leaders who are to exercise proper spiritual aptitudes in the service of the group's growth and vitality. The foundation of individual Christian experience is personal relation to Jesus Christ. But the growth and development of the Christian is a building up of his spiritual life through the ministry of these gifted servants. (See I Corinthians 3:5-17).

Such growth and development is to be desired because fruitfulness is to the glory of God. Peter describes marks of growth so that the believers may have a standard for appraising their own spiritual state. Believers will want to be well pleasing to God, out of gratitude for the grace they enjoy in Christ, and such a description will enable them to chart their own progress in development.

Peter sets forth the challenging idea that believers are "partakers of the divine nature" through the promises of God inherent in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Thus it is a matter of necessity that believers should gain the knowledge of Christ in the Word of God. This is presented in prophecy set forth in the Scriptures. Peter takes time to underscore the validity and unique authenticity of the Scriptures by stating that, far from being given "by the will of man," "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The context permits no doubt as to the plain meaning which Peter here expresses. The implication is equally obvious : Christians should take heed to this word of prophecy in order that they might maintain fruitfulness in their lives.

It is at this point that grave warning is set forth by Peter. The very fact that believers are to follow the leadership of special servants exposes them to the danger of being misled by unfaithful men. Some ministers may build with "wood, hay and stubble." Paul consistently warns against such "ministers of Satan" (Romans 16:17-18; I Corinthians 3:17; 11:19; 15:12; 16:22; II Corinthians 11:3; 13-15; 26; Galatians 1:8-9; 2:4-5; 5:10,12; 6:12-13; Ephesians 4:14; Philippians 3:18-19; Colossians 2:4, 8, 16-23; II Thessalonians 2:3, 9-12; 3:6, 11, 14; I Timothy 1:19; 4:1-3; 6:3-5; II Timothy 2:17; 3:8; 4:3-4; 14; Titus 1:10-11; 3:8-11). John writes at length to expose Antichrist, urging his readers, "Believe not every spirit, . . . because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Jude is almost entirely given over to this one issue. From this attention on the part of the New Testament writers there can be no question as to the serious nature of this danger which besets the Church in its normal life. It is a solemn fact that the Church is in danger of being led into barren, unfruitful experience by clever, gifted men, who use their personal powers in adroit leadership toward exploiting believers for their own interests and advantage.

The aftermath of such "false prophecy" is obvious enough from the history of such cases. They are "wells without water," "clouds" without rain: speaking with "great swelling words of vanity," "beguiling unstable souls" and "alluring" through human interest and desire, but notoriously unproductive. The spiri-

tual condition of the people languishes under their ministry, while the doctrinal soundness of the faith of the Church is impaired through error.

Over against this peril Peter sets the Word of God in the Scriptures. This is the touchstone by which the Church can yet appraise its leaders before their devastating influence can bring about its dire results. The doctrine of the return of Christ is pushed forward as a testing-ground for unsoundness (See Matthew 24: 48-51). At the same time this doctrine is presented as an incentive toward diligent improvement of the believer's relations in Christ (See I John 3:3).

The implication seems plain enough. Christians prosper in spiritual fruitfulness as they live in the promise of God in Christ Jesus, as set forth in the Scriptures and preached in the gospel. Such living is developed and strengthened by growth in the knowledge of Christ, which is to follow the understanding of the Scriptures. God has designed that certain men should serve the Church in various capacities as "helps" in the general increase of grace and knowledge. Thus the function of prophesying is directly related to spiritual growth and health. But some men "follow the way of Balaam," and, for the sake of personal interest, so pervert the meaning of Scripture in their suave ministrations that "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed."

Outline of II Peter

Chapter 1 – Progress in Christian life is possible.

Chapter 2 – False teachers are a real peril.

Chapter 3 – The second coming of Christ is a salutary truth.

Organization of Studies

Forty studies are planned by Dr. Gutzke in this series. Use this chart to keep track of your place with his teaching and for reading ahead. From this you should turn to the appropriate section of the study guide questions.

Introduction, II Peter 1:1-2 :3-4 :5 :6 :7 :8-9 :10 :11 :12-14 :15-16 :17-18 :19-20 :21

II Peter 2:1-2 :3 :4-5 :6 :7-8 :9:10 :11-12 :13 :14 :15-16 :17 :18 :19 :20 :21-22

II Peter 3:1-2 :3-4 :5-6 :7 :8-9 :10 :11-12 :13-14 :15-16 :17-18

Study Questions and Notes

This guide is divided into 13 sections for the convenience of classes or groups. Used weekly, material for one quarter is provided. On a monthly usage, combine sections 1 and 2 to make material for one year.

In studying each section, read through the passage in the Bible first, perhaps in several translations. Then try to paraphrase the passage in your own words. Next form your own answers to the questions. Finally, select a key verse or one that has particular meaning or application for you. Write it out on a card with the chapter and verse reference. Commit it to memory and ask God to bring it to practice in your life. Such a procedure for study and application will prove a great blessing.

Section 1 – Introduction and 1:1-2

Why is this "second" letter needed?

What do all second letters of the New Testament have in common?

What is included in the gospel other than true information?

To whom did Peter write? Does that include you? How could it?

What knowledge of God and of Christ will give grace and peace?

Section 2 – 1:3-9

How is it possible for a person to escape the degeneration going on in the world?

What is involved in Christian living beyond faith or believing?

What is the secret for growing as a Christian as described here?

Describe each step in verses 5-7

What is the meaning of being barren and unfruitful as a Christian?

How could this situation happen?

Section 3 – 1:10-14

What should be our response to the call of the gospel?

What result will this action have as described here?

From verse 11, describe the relationship of believers to Jesus Christ.

Why is it important, according to this passage, to remember what is promised in Jesus Christ and what should we do with that knowledge?

Section 4 – 1:15-21

Why was the New Testament written, according to this passage? What was the role of the apostles?

Who is Jesus Christ? How did Peter know?

Explain "until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

What guidance for understanding the Bible is offered?

Why can the Bible be called "the Word of God"?

Section 5 -2:1-3

Are all who claim to produce growth good?

What error does Peter particularly warn against here?

Will everyone in the churches avoid error? What will be the result?

What motive may lead teachers to be false?

Why do many follow false teachers?

What does Peter mean by "make merchandise of you"?

Section 6 – 2:4-9

What evidence do we find for believing that God will destroy?

In contrast, describe God's treatment of Noah.

Name 5 events in the Bible that are often doubted but that are mentioned in II Peter.

What was dangerous about Lot's procedure? What was his result?

What promise is made for the godly? the ungodly?

Section 7 – 2:10-14

What two traits of those who walk in the flesh are given?

How does the conduct of angels differ from these persons?

How do those described feel about their own conduct?

What evidence is there here that God has withdrawn His grace?

How is adultery a useful figure for describing a spiritual attitude?

Section 8 – 2:15-17

Review the incident of Balaam in Numbers 22.

What was the wrong in Balaam's action?

Explain what is meant by "wells without water," "clouds . . . carried with a tempest" and "the mist of darkness" in 2:17.

How do these terms apply to false teachers?

Section 9 – 2:18-22

What is characteristic of the speech of these false teachers and what makes them so attractive?

What is the real effect or result of their teaching?

In what way would the latter end of a carnal Christian be worse than the first?

How could such a person escape this corruption?

How do the animals described in verse 22 differ from sheep?

Section 10 – 3:1-4

How does Peter undertake to "stir up" our minds?

In verse 2, how does Peter indicate authority for the Old and New Testaments? How are the New Testament writings described?

What promise of Scripture does Peter want Christians to keep in mind?

What argument does he say would be used to discredit that promise?

Why would anyone want to oppose the promise?

Section 11 – 3:5-7

How was the flood directed and controlled?

What was the purpose or result of the flood?

What about the present creation is foretold here?

How are events toward this end being controlled?

How are "the day of judgment" and "the perdition of ungodly men" related?

Section 12 – 3:8-10

How should we understand time?

Why does the Lord not bring in judgment now?

What is "the day of the Lord"?

How does "a thief in the night" come?

What natural event seems to be similar to what Peter describes?

Section 13 – 3:11-18

What would be the effect on the Christian of the end foretold?

How would a Christian be "hasting unto" the day of the Lord?

What is the confident expectation of Christians?

What is the real purpose of God's long-suffering?

How does Peter indicate the Bible could be misused?

What process will keep a Christian strong?

For Discussion or Review

Sketch the character of a Christian growing in maturity.

Sketch the character of a false teacher.

Outline the effect the return of the Lord will have.

Notes

- 1:4 The corruption that is in the world is generated in personal desire (I John 2:16).
- 1:5-7 Diligence in the believer will lead him to add to his faith. Faith is adequate for its function, but when faith is exercised, further other traits should appear.
- 1:8 It is desirable that such traits should abound. Note in verse 3 the addition "and virtue."
- 1:9 Lack of virtues that accompany faith impair a man's judgment and perspective (Hebrews 6:9).
- 1:12-13 (3:1-2) Remembering the plain logical implications of the truth in Christ will stir up a man's interest and resolution.
- 2:2 Believers can be misled.
- 2:19-22 It is possible for some to run along with believers even to the point of becoming leaders in the congregation, without any real permanent change in their natures.
- 3:3-4 The doctrine of the Lord's return will be held up to ridicule "in the last days." The basis of the ridicule will be the lack of any sign of its eventual reality.
- 3:5-13 The most specific picture we have of the prospect of the Lord's return.
- 3:6 Paul's writings esteemed on a level with "the other Scriptures" containing some things hard to be understood, are twisted by the unlearned and unstable to their own destruction.
- It is dangerous to twist any statement out of its context within the mind of the writer. When any interpreter sets Scripture over against Scripture without any attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction so that one statement here is made to contradict or neutralize another statement there, damage is being done to the spiritual state of anyone who entertains such ideas.