

2 Peter 1:1

by John Gill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, holiness, and good works, and encourages believers to exercise these virtues in order to make their calling and election sure and manifest to men.

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:1

Topics: "Faith", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John Gill discusses the authenticity and significance of the epistle of 2 Peter, addressing initial doubts about its authorship and emphasizing its divine origin. He highlights that the letter, written by the Apostle Peter, serves to encourage believers in their faith and warn against false teachers. Gill explains that Peter's message is aimed at increasing grace and spiritual knowledge among the scattered Jewish believers, affirming that their faith is precious and obtained through the righteousness of Christ. The sermon underscores the importance of living out one's faith actively and the assurance of salvation through genuine belief. Ultimately, Gill emphasizes the need for believers to remain steadfast in the truth of the Gospel as they await Christ's return.

Transcript

INTRODUCTION TO II PETER

Though there was, among the ancients, a doubt concerning the authority of this epistle, which is first mentioned by Origen {a}, and afterwards by Eusebius {b} and Jerom {c}, yet it prevailed not among the churches, nor hindered the diligent reading and use of it, together with other Scriptures; it appearing to be useful and profitable, as Eusebius declares; and in process of time this doubt was entirely removed, and it was universally received by fathers and councils into the canon of the Scriptures, where it is justly retained, it having plain signatures of its divine original.

Nor is there anything in it unworthy of so great an apostle, whose name it bears; but the whole of it is agreeable to the analogy of faith, to the rest of the sacred writings, particularly to the epistle of Jude, between which, and the second chapter of this, there is a great likeness. The only reason of the doubt of the genuineness of this epistle, and whether it was written by the Apostle Peter, is the difference of its style from the former; but the Holy Ghost, the dictator of the sacred writings, is not limited to a man's natural style, but could vary it as he pleased: besides, a man's style is not the same at different times, and when writing on different subjects; add to which, that this objection can only regard the second chapter, for the first and third agree with the former epistle.

And some have thought that the second chapter is an extract out of some ancient Hebrew book, describing the characters of the old false prophets; which book Peter and Jude having before them, took the characters of the old prophets, and, under divine direction, applied them to the false teachers of the present age; and if so it is not to be wondered at that the style of the epistle should differ from the former, and even from itself in this part. But that it was written by the Apostle Peter, not only the inscription shows, which, if false, would indeed discredit the genuineness of the book, but the account that is given of the writer of it, as one that was with Christ at his transfiguration, 2Pe 1:16.

Now there were only the three following disciples there, Peter, John, and, James. The last of these had been dead some time when this epistle was written, and it was never ascribed by any to the Apostle John, and therefore it remains that Peter must be the writer of it. As for Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, that succeeded James, whom Grotius would suggest as the author of it, the character does not agree with him; he was not with Christ on the holy mount, nor heard the voice from heaven, asserting the sonship of Christ, and the divine complacency in him: moreover, this epistle is called a "second epistle", 2Pe 3:1 and supposes a first, and manifestly refers to the former epistle of Peter's, about which there never was any doubt, as the authors before mentioned observe.

It was written by the apostle in his old age, when upon the decline of life, just as he was about to put off his tabernacle, 2Pe 1:13 a little before his martyrdom, in the year 68, though Dr. Lightfoot places it in 66; and it is sent to the same persons as his first, namely, to the believing Jews scattered throughout several parts of Asia, he being the minister of the circumcision; see 1Pe 1:1 compared with 2Pe 3:1. The scope and design of it are, to put them upon a concern for a larger increase of grace and spiritual knowledge; to confirm and establish them in the present truth of the Gospel; to warn them against false teachers, which he largely describes; and he puts them in mind of the dissolution of all things, and of what will precede and follow it; from whence he draws several useful hints and inferences.

{a} Apud Euseb. Eccl. Hist. I. 6. c. 25. {b} Ib. I. 3. c. 3. 25. {c} Catalog Script. Eccles. sect. 2.

INTRODUCTION TO II PETER 1

In this chapter, after the inscription and salutation, the apostle takes notice of gifts of grace bestowed; and exhorts to the exercise of holiness and good works; and gives the reasons why he was so pressing to them; and endeavours to establish the saints in the Gospel that had been preached among them. In the inscription, the writer of the epistle describes himself by his names, the one given him by his parents, the other by his Lord and master, and by his character and office; and the persons to whom he writes are described as having faith, and that of the same kind with the apostles, and which they obtained through the righteousness of Christ, 2Pe 1:1.

The salutation is the same with that in the former epistle, only here is added a wish for an increase of divine knowledge, 2Pe 1:2 and which might be expected, since, by the power of living grace, everything necessary to a spiritual and godly life had been given them in the effectual calling, through the knowledge of Christ; even exceeding great and precious promises, whereby they partook of the divine nature, and escaped the vices which prevailed in the world, 2Pe 1:3 upon which he exhorts not to rest where they were, but to go on in the exercise of grace, and performance of duties, many of which he enumerates, 2Pe 1:5 to enforce which he adds several arguments, as that through an abounding in these things they would appear not to have a superficial and speculative knowledge of Christ, 2Pe 1:8 or otherwise it would be evident that they were blind and ignorant, and in an unrenewed state, 2Pe 1:9 whereas by these things

they would make their calling and election sure and manifest to men, and would never fall totally and finally, and in the issue have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ, 2Pe 1:10 and then he gives the reasons of his conduct, why he so much urged a regard to these things, and put them in mind of them; namely, the usefulness of them for their establishment, the duty of his office, which required it, the short time he had to live, and the profitableness of such exhortations to them, after his decease, 2Pe 1:12 and in order to establish them in the truths of the Gospel, and particularly in that which concerns the coming of Christ in power and glory, on which he enlarges in the latter part of this epistle; he observes, that this was not a cunningly devised fable, but was what he and others were eyewitnesses of, even of that which was an emblem and pledge of it; namely, the transfiguration of Christ on the mount, when they saw the glory he received from God his Father, and heard the voice from heaven which declared him to be his well beloved Son, 2Pe 1:16, and besides, they had a surer proof of the certainty of his coming; namely, the prophecies concerning it, which should be regarded and given heed to, being as a lamp to direct in the present state of darkness and imperfection, until the illustrious day of Christ's coming appears, 2Pe 1:19 and the rather this should be attended to, since no scriptural prophecy is an invention and device of men; nor was it formerly given out at the pleasure of men, but by saints, who were influenced and moved unto it by the Holy Ghost, 2Pe 1:20.

Ver. 1. Simon Peter, a servant, and an apostle of Jesus Christ,.... The writer of this epistle is described first by his names, Simon Peter; the first of these was the name by which he was called from his infancy by his parents, and by which he was known when Christ called him to be a disciple and follower of him, and is the same with Simeon; and so it is read in most copies; see Ac 15:14 a name common with the Jews; the latter is what was given him by Christ at his conversion, Joh 1:4, and answers to Cephas in the Syriac language; and both signify a rock or stone, because he was built upon Christ, the rock and foundation, and chief corner stone, and with a view to his future solidity, firmness, and constancy: and he is next described by his character as a servant, not of sin, nor Satan, nor man, but Jesus Christ, whose servant he was, not only by creation, but by redemption and grace; and not merely a servant of his, in common with other believers, but in a ministerial way, as a preacher of the Gospel, which this phrase sometimes designs. The use of it shows the apostle's humility, his sense of obligation to Christ, and acknowledgment of him as his Lord, and that he esteemed it an honour to stand in such a relation to him: but to distinguish him from a common servant of Christ, and an ordinary minister of the word, it is added, "an apostle of Jesus Christ": one that was immediately sent by Christ, had his commission and doctrine directly from him, and a power of working miracles, in confirmation of his mission and ministry being divine, and an authority at large to go everywhere and preach the Gospel, plant churches, and put them in due order, and place proper persons over them. This is said to give weight and authority to his epistle: and further, in this inscription of the epistle, the persons are described to whom it is written, as follows,

to them that have obtained like precious faith with us; they were believers in Christ, who had a faith of the right kind; not a faith of doing miracles, which was not common to all, nor was it saving; nor an historical faith, or a mere assent to truths, nor a temporary one, or a bare profession of faith; but that faith which is the faith of God's elect, the gift of his grace, and the operation of his power; which sees the Son, goes to him, ventures on him, trusts in him, lives upon him, and works by love to him. This is said to be "precious", as it is in its own nature, being a rich and enriching grace, of more worth and value than gold that perisheth, or than thousands of gold and silver; it is not to be equalled by, nor purchased with the riches of the whole world; it is precious in its object, it being conversant with the precious person, precious blood, and precious righteousness and sacrifice of Christ, and is that grace which makes Christ, and all that is his, precious to souls; it is precious in its acts and usefulness; it is that grace by which men go to God and

Christ, receive from them, and give all glory to them, and without which it is not possible to please God: to which add the durableness of it; it is an abiding grace, and will never fail, when the most precious things in nature do: and it is "like precious" with that the apostles had; for there is but one faith, and which is called a common faith, even common to all the elect; and which is the same in all, not as to degrees, for in some it is strong, and in others weak; or as to the actings of it, which are not in all alike, nor in the same persons at all times; in some it is only a seeing of the Son, his glory, fulness, and suitableness, and longing for views of an interest in him; in others a reliance on him, and trusting in him; and in others a holy confidence, and full assurance of being his: but then it is alike with respect to its nature, as it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; and as it works by love to Christ and his people; it springs from the same cause, the love and favour of God, and has the same object, Jesus Christ, and is followed with the salvation; for though it is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet, being genuine, the person that has it shall certainly be saved: wherefore, for the comfort and encouragement of these scattered believers, the apostle assures them, that their faith was the same as their brethren that dwelt at Jerusalem and in Judea, who believed in Christ, and even with them that were the apostles of Christ; and this he says they had obtained, not by their own merits or industry, but by the grace of God; for faith is not of a man's self, it is the gift of God, and the produce of his grace and power. Some have rendered it, "obtained by lot"; not by chance, but by the all wise, good, and powerful providence of God, ordering, directing, assigning, and giving this grace unto them. And which came to them

through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; or "of our God, and Saviour Jesus Christ", as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read; that is, of Christ Jesus, who is our God and Saviour: so that here is a testimony of the deity of Christ, as well as of his character as a Saviour, who is an able and a willing one, a full, complete, suitable, and only Saviour: and the reason why he is so is because he is truly and properly "God"; and why he is so to us, because he is "our" God: wherefore by "righteousness" here, cannot be meant the goodness and mercy of God, as some think, though faith undoubtedly comes through that; nor the faithfulness of God making good his purpose and promise of giving faith to his elect, as others think: but the righteousness of Christ, which is not the righteousness of a creature, but of God; that is wrought out by one that is God, as well as man, and so answerable to all the purposes for which it is brought in. Now faith comes "in", or "with" this righteousness, as the phrase may be rendered; when the Spirit of God reveals and brings near this righteousness to a poor sensible sinner, he at the same time works faith in him to look to it, lay hold upon it, and plead it as his justifying righteousness with God: or it comes "through" it; hence it appears that faith and righteousness are two distinct things; and that faith is not a man's righteousness before God, for it comes to him through it; as also that righteousness is before faith, or otherwise faith could not come by it; and, moreover, is the cause and reason of it; faith has no causal influence upon righteousness, but righteousness has upon faith: the reason why a man has a justifying righteousness is not because he has faith; but the reason why he has faith given him is because he has a justifying righteousness provided for him, and imputed to him.

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