



Who is your  
raison d'être?

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 Wednesday, November 02, 2016  
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## LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

LEARNING FROM PETER & JUDE — AVOIDING NARCISSISTIC DEMENTIA  
 (2 Peter 1) Lord's Day, November 6, 2016

### OVERVIEW

"Session 10" for the *Explore the Bible Series*



In this time of turmoil between narcissist candidates whose goals seems only to win votes, and not to lead, we seek an end to it all. Perhaps a higher view will get us away from the chaos of political nonsense, and spiritual cacophony.

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:  
 WHY DO WE REJECT THE STATUS OF  
 SLAVE, AND PREFER THE MORE POLITI-  
 CALLY CORRECT LABEL OF SERVANT?**

Peter faced similar problems in the early church. Even with external persecution examined by what we call 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, he still faced enemies from within. And so a second letter was penned — dealing with beliefs like what our bodies do is irrelevant — after all, we're spiritual entities anyhow. And, what about Jesus — He only appeared to be human; no Deity would ever condescend to become human with all our weaknesses and evil nature. And then there's the knowledge that only special people with special revelation possess. We've gotta have it, or we're toast, spiritually and literally.

Be careful. We laugh about "them." But, today we are still spiritually demented. Spiritual narcissism infects the church today. For example, we insist seminary-trained people with ordination credentials convey special truths, engage in special acts, and possess special gifts. Also, we excuse our behavior with the toxicity of "spiritualism;" to wit, what I watch or do will not affect me — for I am washed by the blood of the Lamb. Or, we excuse our behavior with the toxicity of "knowledge addiction;" to wit, what I know will overcome anything I do, or fail to do, and will make Him proud on judgment day. Or, we love to be godly — when it's convenient — we don't even know how to spell perseverance. Or, we treat our fellow human beings with kindness, but avoid loving them. Kindness is easy. Love is hard. No wonder we've become spiritually demented, piously blind, and need glasses for anything holy. We've forgotten our calling. Peter's letter is not fun, but it's a good read nonetheless. Put on your steel-toed shoes.



**Spiritually Demented Work Shoes**

Peter was redeemed personally by the Lord when earlier after denying Christ three times in public, Jesus asked him on the beach three times to feed His sheep, as a response to “Do you love Me?” In what we call 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, he does indeed feed His sheep by helping them deal with the external forces persecution then, and helping us with persecution now. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, he focuses upon the internal forces which attack His sheep.

In this second letter, Peter teaches how to deal with wolves—false teachers—and diseases within the flock—evildoers from within. Peter’s purpose is three fold:

1. Stimulate Christian growth in knowledge to combat wolves and evildoers.
2. Combat false teaching, especially about the nature of the Christ as human and Deity.
3. Encourage them and us to be forever watchful, with our lamps trimmed and full of oil.

Although initially a questionable member of the canon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter has been assumed to be legitimate for about 1700 years (after Eusebius). In modern times, given the vast differences in language from 1 Peter, some have questioned its authorship. Perhaps the language skills of Silvanus, who penned 1<sup>st</sup> Peter account for the variance with 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter whose Greek is far less developed.

Most think 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter were written before 70AD, probably during the reign of Nero. Given Peter’s concern about what is now called Gnosticism, some have argued for a much later, non-canonical writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. For the record, as noted below (Advanced Commentary, 1:3), Gnosticism has always been present in almost all religions, and across many if not most periods of history. Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Hinduism have all had varying degrees of the belief in a “special” or “secret” knowledge which only the spiritually elite have access and mastery.

There are interesting similarities between 2 Peter and Jude—see 2 Peter 2 and Jude 1:4-18. Some have suggested a common source. If there is borrowing, it may have been done to meet their respective purposes for writing. The NIV Advanced Commentary © 1996 notes:

“While many have insisted that Jude used Peter, it is more reasonable to assume that the longer letter (Peter) incorporated much of the shorter (Jude). Such borrowing is fairly common in ancient writings. For example, many believe that Paul used parts of early hymns in Php 2:6-11 and 1Ti 3:16.”

So, what do we make of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter? As noted above, the threats to His body can come from without—persecution by those who do not believe in the Deity and humanity of Christ, and false teaching by those who also do not believe in the Deity and humanity of Christ. This is what Peter faced when feeding His sheep. We too must be fed and feed. What we feed is what Peter teaches so much to us. Lean, learn, love.

2 Peter 1:1-11. *Knowledge of Him keeps us close to Him*. Simon Peter, a slave and messenger of Christ Jesus writes to those, who through the righteousness of Jesus the Christ, who is our Savior and God, and who have received a faith equal<sup>1</sup> to His righteousness.

May the power to be righteous<sup>2</sup> and reconciliation [peace]<sup>3</sup> be abundantly yours by means of the knowledge God and of Jesus, the Lord of us. For it is His divine power which has given us everything we need for life and godliness through knowledge of Him. He has called us by means of His glory and goodness; thus, He has committed great power so we can share<sup>4</sup> in His divine nature. We can, thereby, escape the corruption the world causes from evil cravings.

So what? Make every effort to add goodness to your faith. Add knowledge to your goodness. Add

## 2 PETER 1:1-11

Simon Peter, a servant [δουλος, doulos,] and apostle of Jesus [the] Christ,

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus [the] Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

<sup>2</sup>Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup>His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup>Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

<sup>5</sup>For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; <sup>6</sup>and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup>and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup>For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>But if anyone does not have them, he is forgetful and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

<sup>10</sup>Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, <sup>11</sup>and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus [the] Christ.

<sup>1</sup>The Greek is *ισότιμον*, ehs-ah-ti-mon, 2472). Often rendered “precious,” Peter is saying our faith is an equally privileged or honored faith. No other instances of this word are found in Scripture besides 2 Pet 1:1.

<sup>2</sup>Grace is not just a state, but a process of living in which Holy Spirit guides us to a closer relationship with the Lord God. Thus, grace is more than a status gained by an initial acceptance of Christ’s Lordship, but our continuing, delightfully joyous struggle to know Him and the Father deeply, reverently, and as a friend (cf., John 15:14) via assistance of Holy Spirit.

<sup>3</sup>Remember there are four types of peace. Understanding the kind of peace Peter is speaking about is key; to wit,

- A. *pax*—the Latin word designating the absence of conflict. Peace is making sure the parties do not war against each other as in “do war no more.” For example, see Deuteronomy 20:12.
- B. *ειρηνην* (ay-ray-nayn)—the Greek word for equilibrium; i.e., putting things back the way they were. Peace is reconciling two parties to a previous state of balance and harmony, as in “now you give your brother back his toy.” For example, see 1 Samuel 20:42 or Matthew 5:9.
- C. *islam*—the Arabic word for peace through submission. Peace is ensuring that all submit to the sovereign authority, as in “... a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter...” (Revelation 19:5, referring to the Christ). For example, see Judges 3:29-30 or Revelation 19:11-16
- D. *shalom*—the Hebrew word designating a sense of holistic well-being. Peace is having everything together in its right place, both spiritual and material. Robert Browning’s sarcastic comment, “God is in His heaven and all is right with the world” was used to illustrate shalom, specifically the ironic lack thereof. For example, see Leviticus 26:6

<sup>4</sup>The Greek here is *κοινωνοι*, koi-noh-noi, 2844, a partner or companion. Our relationship with the Christ gives us the ultimate source of righteousness, God Himself—Jesus the Christ.

self-control to your knowledge. Add perseverance to your self-control. Add godliness to your perseverance. And add kindness to your godliness, and finally—add love to your kindness. If you increase your possession of these attributes, then you will be inoculated against ineffectiveness and unproductive as you gain more knowledge about the Christ Jesus our Lord. Without these attributes, you’re going to be spiritually nearsighted, if not blind, and demented—you’ve forgotten He who cleansed you of your sins and that you are have in fact been cleaned from sin. Ergo, believers—be even more eager to make your *raison d’être* and selection by the Lord God protected. Because? If you increase your faith by adding...

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|----------------|----------------|
| ⌘ Goodness     | ⌘ Perseverance |
| ⌘ Knowledge    | ⌘ Godliness    |
| ⌘ Self-control | ⌘ Kindness     |
|                | ⌘ Love         |

you will *never* fail. And...

Jesus the Christ will welcome you into His eternal kingdom.

—Now that’s a prize worth seeking!—

- Q Why would Peter call himself a “slave” of Jesus the Christ? To what extent are we slaves of Jesus?
- Q How is our faith as precious—equally honored—as Christ Jesus Himself?
- Q According to Peter here, verse 2, what is the source of the power to be righteous and reconciliation? How so?
- Q What are these “great and precious” gifts Jesus has given us? How are they accessed?
- Q What are the two purposes of these “great and precious” gifts? How do these gifts accomplish these purposes? Why does the Lord God want these purposes fulfilled?
- Q If you had to, which of the attributes listed in verses 5-7 would you leave out?
- Q What is the purpose of this constellation of attributes? How do they in actuality lead to productive and effective knowledge of Jesus the Christ?
- Q What forms of spiritual dementia and/or blindness occur when these attributes are not fertilized, watered, pruned?
- Q Why aren’t more of us more consistently eager to ensure His calling and our selection by Him?
- Q To what extent have we have we become spiritually narcissistic; i.e., blind to *why* Father God sent His Son to atone for our sins (see Romans 3:25-26) and *why* He sent Holy Spirit to guide us (c.f., John 14:26)? What are some examples of our narcissistic dementia?



**1:1** The actual word is not servant, but slave. The Greek (δουλος) *doúlos* (a masculine noun of uncertain derivation) – properly, someone who belongs to another; a *bond-slave*, without *any ownership rights* of their own. Ironically, *doúlos* ("bond-slave") is used with the *highest dignity* in the NT – namely, of believers who *willingly* live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers. See <http://biblehub.com/greek/1401.htm>

*apostle*. See Mk 6:30; 1Co 1:1; Heb 3:1. *To those*. Possibly the same people as those in 1Pe 1:1.

*God and Savior Jesus the Christ*. Assumes Jesus is both God and Savior. Other ascribe deity to Christ include Romans 9:5; see also Romans 1:4; Mt 1:23; 28:19; Lk 1:35; 5:20-21; Jn 1:1,3,10,14,18; 5:18; 2Co 13:14; Php 2:6; Col 1:15-20; 2:9; Tit 2:13; Heb 1:3,8; 2Pe 1:1; Rev 1:13-18; 22:13.

*have received*. God in his justice ("righteousness") imparts to people the ability to believe. *a faith*. Not here a body of truth to be believed—the faith—but the act of believing, or the God-given capacity to trust in Christ for salvation. Faith is a gift, not an earned attribute or status or process of being.

**1:2** *Grace and peace*. See foot notes on page 3 and John 14:27; 20:19; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2.

*knowledge of God and of Jesus*. The concept of Christian knowledge is prominent in 2 Peter (see 1:3,5,8; 3:18). Peter was combating heretical teaching, and one of the best antidotes for heresy is the statement of the source and relationship to true knowledge—to wit, Εγω ειμι ... αληθεια (John 14:6): **I** am the truth.

**1:3** *everything we need for life and godliness*. God has made available all that we need spiritually through our knowledge of him. If 2 Peter was written partially to combat an embryonic Gnosticism within Christianity, the apostle may be insisting that knowledge possessed by those in apostolic circles was entirely adequate to meet their spiritual needs. Contrary to Gnostic orthodoxy and orthopraxy, no secret, esoteric knowledge is necessary for salvation, sanctification, or glorification.

Incidentally, Gnostic thinking has always been a toxic influence, regardless of religion or time. There has been and always will be those who argue for secret and special knowledge, the possession of which leads you to ... The possessors of this special knowledge find this type of thinking very useful for control, persuasability, and narcissist maintenance.

**1:4** *Through these*. Through God's excellence--internal and external--He has given us great promises. Their nature is suggested in the words that follow: participation in the divine nature and escape from worldly corruption.

**1:6** *self-control*. According to many of the false teachers, knowledge made self-control unnecessary; according to Peter, Christian knowledge leads to self-control. *godliness*. A genuine reverence toward God that governs one's attitude toward every aspect of life.

**1:8** *keep you from being . . . unproductive in your knowledge*. The Christian's knowledge should affect the way he lives. It does not set him free from moral restraints, as heretics often teach; rather, it produces holiness and all such virtues (cf. Colossians 1:9-12).

**1:10** *make your calling and election sure*. By cultivating the qualities listed in vv. 5-7, they and others can be assured that God has chosen them and called them (cf. Mt 7:20). The genuineness of their profession will be demonstrated as they express these virtues (cf. Gal 5:6; Jas 2:18). When God elects and calls, it is to obedience and holiness (1Pe 1:2; Eph 1:3-6), and these fruits confirm their divine source. *never fall*. Those who in this way give evidence of their faith will never cease to persevere.

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<sup>5</sup>Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.