

Text: 2 Pt 1.1

Last week we spent our time discussing the biggest introductory issue regarding 2 Peter, that of authorship. Once we settle this question, all the other questions fall into place.

Our view is that 2 Peter is certainly by Simon Peter, the author of 1 Peter, and the leading apostle among the twelve.

2 Pt 3.1 refers to an earlier letter. We take that to be 1 Peter. This, then, settles the audience: the same people Peter wrote to in the first letter.

“That audience was primarily Gentile, but also Jewish, Christians living in northern Asia Minor (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1). The background of the readers and the situation they faced, as Peter described these, fit such an audience well.”¹

Peter also mentions his imminent departure (death) in 1.13-15. This suggests a date near to AD 67-68, when tradition says Peter died in Rome.

I think I mentioned the similarity of Jude to 2 Peter 2. Some want to have Peter borrow from Jude as he writes this chapter, but the most conservative scholars believe Peter wrote first and Jude summarized him.

What is Peter’s purpose in writing?

He wants to ground his readers in the faith, to equip them to oppose false doctrine and false teachers.

“Like the Epistle of Jude, the aim of 2 Peter is to expose and defeat the intrusion of false teachers into the Church.”²

And thus, we come to the salutation, 2 Peter 1.1.

When we read the simple words here, we might think, “a simple, ordinary, epistolary introduction.”

We would be wrong.

These words are full of theological depth and meaning. Almost everything about this verse is instructive for us.

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Pt 1.1.

² D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, S.C: Bob Jones University Press, 1989), 23.

Proposition: The only way to receive Peter's letter is as a Christian, sharing Peter's faith, which is rooted in our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I. The authority of the words (the simplest part of the verse)

A. Authority indicated by the Semitic form, *Simeon*

1. As noted last week, only used of Peter in Acts 15.14, Jerus. Council
2. In OT, the LXX always transliterates the patriarch with this form
3. *Simon* is a Greek form of the same name
4. Mss. divided almost equally on the two forms
5. Since *Simeon* is less usual even in the NT, it is more likely
6. A pseudo-Peter, writing in the 2nd c. (as some claim) would be very unlikely to us it

Thus, a subtle argument for the early date and Peter's authorship ... and authority

B. Authority underscored by self-designations

1. A bond-servant (*doulos*, slave): a term often used by Paul, indicates total ownership of Christ
2. An apostle: one of the authorized and authoritative spokesmen for Christ

The point is, Peter is the author, he has authority, and he is speaking in this epistle *with* authority.

II. The united faith of the recipients

A. The recipients of the letter were recipients of "a faith of the same kind as ours" ("received" implies receipt of a tangible gift)

1. Immediately the Calvinists want to say the thing they received was subjective faith
 - a. You can't even believe by yourself
 - b. You must be given faith to believe

2. On the contrary, Peter has something else in mind
 - a. The term faith is qualified by “of the same kind as ours”
 - b. The “ours” here is interpreted three different ways
 - 1) The apostles, their faith is the same as the apostles
 - 2) The whole Christian community, “you readers are in with us”
 - 3) The Jewish Christians, “you Gentile believers get to share the faith also”

I tend to prefer option one, since there is nothing in the text that implies either of the others. Option three is possible, but I think Peter’s message is to both Jews and Gentiles.

Is the faith they received the same in the sense that they believed just like the apostles did (or like Jewish Christians do)?

- c. The doctrine of the apostles was the ground of Christian fellowship

Ac 2.42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- d. The recipients are those who share that same body of doctrines, what Jude will call “the faith”

B. The point of the letter is to bolster the recipients in standing for the faith

1. Remember the purpose mentioned earlier

“Like the Epistle of Jude, the aim of 2 Peter is to expose and defeat the intrusion of false teachers into the Church.”³

- a. Peter will spend chapter one promoting growth in that faith
- b. Peter will spend chapter two warning them of the character and judgement of false teachers

³ Hiebert, 23.

c. Peter will spend chapter three encouraging them with the doctrine of the second coming

2. The recipients are united in the faith of the apostles

III. The powerful ground of our united faith

Peter adds: “by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:”

“Every word of this addition has evoked discussion.”⁴

A. The instrument or location of our faith: “by” or “in”

1. The Gk preposition is “in”

2. However, it has multiple uses, including *instrumentality* (by) [normal use is *locality* (in)]

3. You could understand it either way

a. The apostolic doctrine, our united faith is “by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”

b. The apostolic doctrine, our united faith is “in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”

4. If it is by Christ’s righteousness, the focus is on the cross that accomplished it

5. If it is in Christ’s righteousness, the focus is on the person who provides it

Both concepts are true, and it is hard to decide which to go with, though our translators go with “by.”

B. Righteousness:

1. The question

a. Is it God’s justice

b. Or is it Christ’s perfect life and sacrifice

2. Conservatives don’t debate this: we are utterly dependent on the righteousness of Christ, nothing else will save us

⁴ Hiebert, 35.

C. Our God and Saviour

1. The phrase is constructed like this [article] God *and* Saviour
2. The one article collects the two terms into one concept
3. The name Jesus Christ stands in apposition (renames) the previous term
4. What this means is that Peter affirms that Jesus is both God and Saviour
 - a. This is apostolic doctrine
 - b. This is *saving* doctrine
 - c. This is our united doctrine

Conclusion:

Proposition: The only way to receive Peter's letter is as a Christian, sharing Peter's faith, which is rooted in our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.