

Sent: Wednesday, 18 November 2015 19:55
Subject: Last Nite's First Lesson on 2 Peter

Men--Last nite, we had the first of four lessons on the book of 2 Peter. Because of the holiday season, they will extend through the end of the year. Lesson #2, covering 2 Peter 2:1-6, will held on December 1, while Lesson #4 won't take place, in fact, until January 5, 2016! So be sure to check the schedule--and stay with it!

Peter wrote his second letter to believers and followers of Christ, as a kind of "last will and testament"--(1) to encourage them "to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," (2) to remind them of the origin and "trustworthiness" of the Scriptures (the Word of God), (3) to warn them about "damnable heresies" which were already infiltrating the church, and which would deceive many; and (4) to reassure them of the promise and reality of Christ's return!

Peter begins his letter by referring to "those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" (KG's used the term "those of like precious faith"), by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ!" This is a direct affirmation of the Deity of Christ (Jesus was God in the flesh!), which was and still is a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith! This was also one of the key themes we found in our study of I John!

Peter says we as believers ("those of like precious faith") have been "granted" everything we need "pertaining to life and godliness"! And he makes it clear that our faith is based on "true knowledge"--i.e., clear, objective, revealed, historical truth from God which is intended to be understood, believed, and taught!

Peter says that because of His "precious and magnificent promises," we have become "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." And because of what we already have, Peter urges us--"with all diligence" (indicating effort on our part)--to add to our faith seven specific qualities, as part of the process of "sanctification" (or becoming more like Christ): (1) "virtue" (or moral excellence), (2) "knowledge" (of God and His Word), (3) "patience" (or self-control), (4) "perseverance" (or "spiritual staying power"), (5) "godliness" (as a way of life), (6) "brotherly kindness," and (7) "love" (the "agape-type" love of II Cor. 13). Having these "virtues," Peter writes, will "render us neither useless nor unfruitful"--and practicing them will keep us from "stumbling" and give us assurance in our profession of faith!

As part of his "last words," Peter also wanted to assure us of the trustworthiness of God's Word! He states that "we (speaking for the apostles) did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but was eye-witnesses of His majesty--referring to the transfiguration of Christ, where God the Father declared that He was indeed the "beloved Son of God!" But he goes on to say that we have something even better--a "more sure word of prophecy" (speaking of the Word of God)! And we "do well to pay attention to it as to a lamp shining in the darkness..."--an obvious reference to Psalm 119:105, where the Psalmist writes: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

MacArthur makes the point that Peter is here ranking Scripture over any "experience"--even his own on the Mount of Transfiguration! In other words, the Bible--the Word of God--is more complete, more permanent, and more authoritative than the experience of any person. Peter writes: "But know this first of all (in the sense of priority or importance) that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God!" Jesus Himself prayed to His Father, in John 17:13, just before heading the cross: "Sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth!"

And this sets the tone for the rest of Peter's writing! It's through the truth of the Scripture that we can "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ..." (3:18). And it's only through knowing the Scripture that we are able to maintain doctrinal stability, and to recognize, expose, and thwart false teaching--which is the theme of Lesson #2, coming on December 1st.

Meanwhile, have a Happy Thanksgiving! And continue your walk with the Lord!

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