

# CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

## A Study of 2 Peter

### STUDY ONE

## A Letter That Rattles Our Cage

*Selections from 2 Peter*

*Second Peter is designed to rattle our cage, to stir up our soul, to keep us on the cutting edge of reality, and to spur us into action.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SOME letters that arrive in the mail get our attention more than others. “Urgent! Immediate action required!” stamped on the envelope prompts us to tear open the letter right away—only to find a slick advertising flyer inside! Nothing really important, so in the trash it goes.

Second Peter is emblazoned with urgent calls to action, but it’s no empty marketing tool. This to-the-point letter delivers messages of vital importance, and we dare not toss it aside.

Peter stated his goal bluntly: “to stir you up” (2 Peter 1:13 NASB). He designed his letter to rattle some cages in the hopes that it would spur his readers to wake up and be *diligent* in their walk with Christ.

Why was Peter so urgent? Because false teachers had infiltrated the churches and were undermining the faith. Also, the Lord had shown Peter that his life’s clock was ticking its final hour, and Peter had more to say and not much time to say it. “The stakes are so high,” wrote Peter, and “I am especially eager that you have all this down in black and white so that after I die, you’ll have it for ready reference” (1:12, 15 MSG).

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll overview 2 Peter and map the territory. Adventures await in this intriguing letter, so let’s pray and get started.



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S01  
1

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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Ask for the Holy Spirit's insight as you open God's Word.

*Father, speak to me through the passage of Scripture I study today. With the help of the Holy Spirit, illuminate the truths it contains. I open my ears to hear Your instructions. I open my eyes to see Your hand at work in my life. Lead me in Your path. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read [2 Peter](#) in the New Living Translation from beginning to end, all sixty-one verses. Note Peter's emphasis on Christian virtues, his warnings against false teachers, and his fascinating discussion of end times. What verse stands out to you as most encouraging?

Although 1 and 2 Peter were written by Peter, the letters bear some differences. First, *Peter's second letter is more difficult to interpret than his first*. Discussing hope amid suffering in 1 Peter, Peter just briefly mentioned "the day when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:7). In 2 Peter, however, Peter whisks his readers on a journey into the future, which requires us to dig deeper to understand the complex subject of end times.

Second, *Peter's concern in 2 Peter is different than in 1 Peter*. Peter's first letter focuses on external persecution from a culture bent on crushing Christianity. Second Peter shifts to internal corruption from false teachers—a far more insidious danger.

Let's look closer at Peter's themes in 2 Peter, but first a word about the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.



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**Searching the Scriptures Method and Resources**

Observation is the foundational phase in *Searching the Scriptures*, on which we build *interpretation* (the meaning of the passage) and *correlation* (the meaning enhanced by other passages). Finally comes *application*, putting the Scriptures into practice. For helpful instruction on *Searching the Scriptures*, consult the Insight for Living Ministries web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).” There, you can also follow the [link to purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck’s book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.



**Observation: Peter’s Themes**

The themes in 2 Peter fit together like the feathers, shaft, and point of an arrow aimed straight at the reader’s heart. Three subjects comprise the feathers: warnings, reminders, and promises. Read the verses below and write down your observations on how the verses illustrate the subjects.

Warnings	Reminders	Promises
<a href="#">1:4</a>	<a href="#">1:12–13</a>	<a href="#">1:10</a>
<a href="#">2:1–3</a>	<a href="#">2:21–22</a>	<a href="#">2:9</a>
<a href="#">3:14</a>	<a href="#">3:1–2</a>	<a href="#">3:13</a>



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These “feathers” amount to nothing more than spiritual fluff if we don’t act on them. So, the main shaft of the arrow is *diligence*. What did Peter say about this theme in [2 Peter 1:10](#) and [3:14](#)?

Finally, when we diligently apply Peter’s warnings, reminders, and promises, the resulting outcome is the tip of the arrow: *hope*. What “hope” forms the central point in [1:11](#); [2:9](#); and [3:9](#)?

This diagram illustrates how these themes fit together.



*Shift your mind into gear. With diligence, carry out the game plan God set forth in 2 Peter, and the point of the arrow will follow: hope. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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*Selections from 2 Peter*



Interpretation: Mapping 2 Peter

A chart is a handy tool to aid interpretation. Read through this chart thoughtfully, and then answer the following questions.

SECOND PETER

Introduction (1:1–2)	<b>Exhortation to Spiritual Maturity</b>  <b>Answers question:</b> How can I grow in grace and knowledge? (1:2–3)	<b>Denunciation of False Teachers</b>  <b>Answers question:</b> What should I expect from so-called prophets?	<b>Anticipation of Christ's Return</b>  <b>Answers question:</b> What sort of people ought we to be? (3:11)	Conclusion (3:17–18)
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	
Warning	Be pure! (1:4)	Be aware! (2:1–3)	Be diligent! (3:1–14)	
Reminder	1:12–13	2:21–22	3:1–2	
Promise	"You will never stumble." (1:10)	"The Lord knows how to rescue." (2:9)	"We are looking for new heavens and a new earth." (3:13)	
Perspective	Looking within	Looking back	Looking ahead	
Theme	Spiritual maturity as a remedy for false teaching and a right response in light of Christ's second coming			
Key Verses	3:17–18			
Christ in 2 Peter	Jesus is the Morning Star, who rescues the righteous from temptation and reserves the wicked for judgment (1:19; 2:9).			

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Peter wrote 2 Peter shortly before his death by crucifixion in AD 67, during Nero's reign of terror in Rome. Early church tradition states that Peter requested to be crucified upside down so as not to suffer in the same manner as his Lord.



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The principles in 2 Peter weren't just theories for Peter; he lived them. Hope of "the new heavens and the new earth" and "a world filled with God's righteousness" kept Peter faithful through his sufferings and brutal martyrdom (2 Peter 3:13).

Based on what you glean from the chart, what would you say is the purpose of 2 Peter?

Key terms in 2 Peter include *knowledge* (1:2–3, 8; 2:20–21), *corruption* (2:19), and *diligence* ("make every effort" 3:14). What do these terms mean, and how are they connected in Peter's argument?

*Every time you read Peter's letters, remember this was the man who denied knowing Christ while the Savior was under arrest. The man who failed was also forgiven fully, and he became the pillar of the early church. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: The Dangers of False Teachers

With the apostles aging, rogue teachers were already moving in, spreading false doctrine and moral compromise in the churches. Although Peter's writing may seem surprising and strange to us, his early readers heard the old apostle's warnings loud and clear: beware of the charlatans, stick with the Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, keep hoping in Christ's return, and maintain holy lives until He returns.



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Later, Jude, one of Jesus' half-brothers, issued similar red alerts in his brief letter to the churches. What warning did Jude give in [Jude 1:3–4](#)?

Possibly referring to 2 Peter, Jude urged his readers to “remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted” (1:17). What dangers did the apostles (including Peter) anticipate, according to [1:18–19](#)?

Don't underestimate the threat to the early church these false teachers posed with their flagrant lifestyles and self-serving heresies. Indeed, we must continue to guard against them even today.

*What are the characteristics of false teachers? They are more interested in gaining popularity than declaring the truth, in receiving than in giving. They model seduction toward evil rather than attraction toward good, and they lead people from God, not to God.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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### Application: The HOPE-filled Life

Peter breathed his final words hoping in Christ and urging those he loved to do the same. As we conclude, let's summarize the message of 2 Peter with an acrostic—*HOPE*.

*H—Heed what you already know* (2 Peter 1:12–13; 3:1–2). Peter reminded his readers of the principles he had taught because they weren't practicing them. Don't simply store up knowledge; live what you know.

*O—Open your eyes and ears* (2:1–3; 3:17). Don't confuse a teacher's charisma with orthodoxy. Compare what you hear with the Scriptures. Study people's lives as well as their words, and if they don't match, watch out.

*P—Pursue a godly lifestyle* (3:11, 14). Whenever Christ's return is mentioned in the New Testament, the emphasis is always on right living. Real hope produces godliness.

*E—Expect Christ's return* (3:12). Pray through your day with the thought that Christ could return at any moment. You'll be surprised at how this practice will transform your attitude and inspire pure living.

Perhaps this dip into 2 Peter has already stirred your heart. What can you do to put HOPE into action?

What phrase or verse from Peter's letter can you carry with you today?





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# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

## STUDY

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Peter penned his most urgent words to those whom he gave his life serving. He shared truths about living pure in a morally corrupt society (2 Peter 1), anchoring ourselves in the Scriptures in a time of doctrinal compromise (2 Peter 2), and fixing our hearts on Christ's return in a day of passing pleasures (2 Peter 3).

*Last words are lasting words.* Peter's final call to action is just as urgent in our world of moral corruption and doctrinal compromise. Peter's answer is straightforward: keep our eyes fixed on Christ and anticipate "a world filled with God's righteousness" (3:13) when Christ returns.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I believe Your plan for the world is playing out just as You intended. My heart yearns for the return of Christ and the new creation that will follow. I long for Your righteousness to fill the earth. But first, fill me with Your righteousness, and keep me diligent in my walk with Christ. In His name, amen.*



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S01  
9