

2 Peter 1:1-2 A Clear Gospel 06/18/17

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

(Pastor prays)

Things are almost always better when they are clear. Just as cloudy water to drink makes you nervous and a dirty windshield makes it hard to drive, so a muddled understanding of the Gospel makes living it impossible.

I have on my face a pair of glasses that are called “progressive,” not because they are so advanced but because the bottom part allows me to read up close and the top allows me to see far off, and to do so clearly. Clarity, that’s in part why this little book called 2nd Peter was written. When Peter wrote it, some 30 years had passed since the life, death and resurrection of Jesus had happened and that’s enough time for people to drift in their knowledge of God and their understanding of the Gospel.

Peter writes a little letter to help clear things up and as the church, part of your obligation, in every generation, is to clearly articulate the Gospel so that we might rightly live the Gospel. Because if you don’t know what you really believe, how in the world can you really know how to live? So many of the issues we face in this life are spiritual issues because people claim to be children of God without actually knowing God. Isn’t that what Jesus meant in Matthew 7:22-23 when he said *On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* It’s why we must be clear. It’s why Peter wrote this letter. Things are always better when they are clear.

Clarity on the Gospel Gives Clarity for Life

I think these first few verses in 2nd Peter gives us several things to be clear on.

Be Clear in Your Identity

Let me show you what I mean. Notice how Peter opens the letter and how he identifies himself. *Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ*. This tells us a couple of things.

- A. He is a changed man. He calls himself Simeon (Simon) Peter. Simon was his given name and into adulthood, it's who he was before he met Jesus. He was just another man living out his life. He had a vocation. He was married. But there was not much else that stood out about him except that he was a sinner like everybody else. But that wasn't his whole story. He wasn't just Simon. He was Simon Peter. Peter in Greek means "rock." It was the name Jesus gave him and it symbolizes the change in his life upon meeting Jesus. He was a sinner. And after meeting Jesus, he still looked like Simon but he had been changed into Simon Peter, a sinner saved by grace. More than that, a saint, a child of God, a trophy of grace. This is important because it reminds us of what Paul said in Romans 5, that where sin abounds, Grace abounds all the more. This is important to grasp. For all of you carrying the indignity of sin or shame, carrying a history of divorce or abortion, adultery or pornography, homosexuality, hate, greed or lust, or maybe a liar, all that is sin. But where sin abounds, grace abounds more. And when you come to Christ and trust in His perfect life and atoning death and victorious resurrection, then you are changed and your sinful past becomes the canvas on which God paints His amazing grace with the blood of Jesus. Are you a changed man? Have you met Jesus and been changed? Peter wasn't just a changed man,
- B. He was a humble man. In the first verse, he is Simeon Peter, a servant. Servant is a cleaned-up English word. The Greek word is *doúlos*, slave. Peter was a person who had willingly given up rights and aspirations to serve the master. He would always think only about how his life could reflect glory on and give service to the master. American Christianity has been so scrubbed that we want a God who serves us, like a genie in a bottle ready to fulfill all of our wildest desires. Not Peter. He saw himself as a servant to Jesus. Remember who this is now. Peter is the one who so infamously denied Jesus. Do you remember the story of that night? It's in Luke 22. It's the night of the Lord's Supper. The disciples had an

argument about who was the greatest among them. In Luke 22:31-32, listen to what Jesus says to Peter. *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”*

That’s who is writing this letter. A man who has been humbled by grace.

Doctrines of grace don’t make you arrogant, they make you humble because you understand that you deserve death and Christ has given you life. You deserve Hell and Christ gives you Heaven. You learn to see yourself in the light of grace and the spirit of humility. Christian humility kills racism and classism and sexism. It kills judgmentalism, unforgiveness and bitterness. Becoming a Christian doesn’t make you better than everyone else; it reminds you that, without Christ, you were worse. Peter was a changed man and a humbled man but there is something else.

- C. He was a useful man. Notice also in verse one, he calls himself Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. That last title, apostle of Jesus Christ, it’s interesting he saved the title with authority until the end when we almost always lead out with the title. Mr., Reverend, Dr. As an apostle, he was called and appointed by God for a task, a life of service and he was living it out. Now, none of us are apostles but we all have a task. Some will be called to go to the mission field or to be a pastor or some other kind of full-time ministry. I was in middle school when I sensed that was what God wanted me to do with my life. Some here will sense that; but most will be called to be useful in service to God through faithfulness in using your job or careers as a means to finance a ministry to your family, co-workers, and neighbors. The issue is not so much how you will be used but if – IF you will allow yourselves to be used. And that lands me on my second point of clarity. Be clear in your identity and

Be Clear on Your Beliefs

Let’s take the rest of verse 1 and 2 together and allow me to point out a few crucial items of our faith. The first is equity. The Gospel is the great equalizer. We are the same as the apostles. Another is unconditional love. You don’t do anything to gain God’s love. It’s given to you and if you do love Him it’s because He first loved you. I want to talk a little about the imputed righteousness of our faith. Jesus earned righteousness. We

sing this all the time. My hope is built on nothing less. The beautiful last stanza says: “When He shall come with trumpet sound, oh may I then in Him be found. Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.” And Peter tells us why this is possible and he does so in the strongest terms available. The end of verse 1 says, *by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*: A clear statement of the deity, the complete divinity of Christ which is vital for us to see. Jesus is not just a teacher to admire or an example to follow. He is (according to verse 1) God and Savior. We worship a triune God who makes salvation possible. It’s good to think about how God saves people. It’s like this: Salvation originates with God the Father. Salvation is accomplished by God the Son. And, salvation is applied by God the Spirit. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the 3 in 1, calling today for sinners to be saved. There is clarity in the Gospel. There is clarity for life. Be changed, humbled, and useful. Be clear on your identity. Be clear on your beliefs.

(Pastor prays and prepares the congregation for the Lord’s Supper)