

## Darek Siwek - 2 Peter

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A few months ago I was talking about first letter of Apostle Peter, and today I would like to continue with the Apostle Peter message, taking under consideration his second letter. Before we go to the second letter, let's do a quick summary of the first letter. It is probable that both of these letters were written after death of Apostle Paul and addressed at least to some extent the same classes that Apostle Paul visited or worked with before.

The first letter would be written sometimes between years 60 and 64, and the second one probably written just before Apostle Peter's death. That would be around 64 or 65. The first letter is written to encourage and motivate brethren to treasure and develop their faith, and since the picture is worth a thousand words, which is about 10 minutes of talking. This graphic is taken from the site Bibleproject.com and you see the graphical interpretation of the structure of the first Peter.

Apostle Peter writes about great God's grace that through death of his Son, provided salvation for all peoples and great promises for believers. Using the metaphor of the temple, he tells brethren that they are building blocks of that great spiritual temple. But with this great favor from God comes responsibility, and Peter writes brethren that they should live life reflects their faith, giving them sometimes detailed instruction how they should behave among those who don't believe, how they should treat representatives of the civil government, how they should treat their spouses and brethren in their classes. He also writes of possible persecution and advices to go through them with patience because that was the example of our Lord.

The purpose of the letter is to strengthen and encourage all those who would read it, including all of us here. Apostle Peter writes that this first letter was written with help of Silas, who probably knew Greek very well because those who are experts tell us that Greek of the first letter is quite sophisticated and probably it would not be possible for Peter to achieve such a level of fluency in this language. The second letter is different. The Greek language experts say that the language of this letter is quite simple and there is impression that it was written by someone who learned Greek from somebody else, but it wasn't his native language.

Because of language differences and the fact that this letter during two first centuries was not quoted by other Christian writers, some researchers had a suspicion that this was not authentic Peter's letter, but forgery from the second century. Those who would suggest that point out that this letter could be based on the Jude's letter that also includes warning about false teachers, and the Jude's letter was written later after Peter's death. Since the problem of Gnosticism developed a little bit later and that seems to be a problem that this letter describes. Some would push the time of writing of this letter to the second century, but others would point out that that letter would warns about false teachers that are too calm.

So it is not a very strong argument. I found a website that goes into detailed discussion on that subject of authenticity of this letter and this slide shows the link for those who cannot see it. This is on the webpage Bible.org and the article number is 22. It is titled Second Introduction, Arguments and Outline.

We already mentioned that this letter is quite different as far as the language goes, but its structure is also quite different. We may find the reason for that in first chapter verses 3, 13 and 14. Peter writes, I consider it right as long as I am in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by the way of reminder, knowing that the laying outside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord

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Jesus Christ has made clear to me. We know that John in his Gospel writes of one of such prophecies. We read chapter 21 and verses 18 and 19 where our Lord tells this to Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger you used to gird yourself yourself and walk wherever you wished, but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands and somebody else will gird you and bring you where you do not wish to go.

Now this he said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God, and when he had spoken this, he said to him, follow me. We don't know if Peter refers to this prophecy or if Lord revealed him more details shortly before his death, but when he writes the letter, Peter is convinced that his death will come soon, and we can mention also that Gospel of John was probably written later after this letter and after Peter's death. So that was not the reference that Apostle Peter used.

What do you write to those who are under your spiritual care when you know that this is your last letter? We could say just the most important things that in this case something that would assure they are calling an election sure, as Apostle Peter writes in 1:10 Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. I'm using King James translation here because that I think is the rendition that is most familiar for us.

There are two such important things for Peter. One is the development of faith and character, and the second is avoiding those things and peoples that could endanger that development. Peter saw that in his time there were people that teach things that are false and that their numbers were growing. He warns brethren that accepting those teachings may lead them away from God and take the promise of their salvation away. These are two main topics, but there is more.

Again, to save some time and words, I will show a graphical interpretation of the structure of this letter.

We'll find here the list that should set the standard for all Christians. Story from his own life that shows him and other apostles as direct recipients of God's word, confirming Christ's mission and their selection. Descriptions of immorality of false teachers and assurance of coming punishment for them, with examples of punishment for sinful angels and peoples described in the Old Testament. Emphasis of importance of Old Testament prophecies and also some information about end of the world, the second world to be precise, and the beginning of the third world, which will bring glory for faithful believers and will never end. Having this glorious end in our mind.

Let's go back to the beginning of the letter to learn what advice we received from the apostle that would help us to be part of this new world. When we start reading the first chapter, we'll find one word that is repeated a few times. It looks like this is quite an important word here, but it means its meaning could be different. Different than we assume.

Let's read verses two to nine. Let's start from the first of the first chapter using the King James translation. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ, Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord, according to his divine power, hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust and beside this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance.

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And to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Apostle addresses his letter to those learned about God and his righteousness.

Their initial knowledge turn into faith and thanks to that, they have peace with God through His justification and access to his grace. It is apostles wish that this grace and peace would multiply, but it can only happen if their knowledge of God and His Son would increase. If that increase of knowledge happens, then they can claim the precious promise of being in the group that will be transformed to the highest form of spiritual existence, the Divine nature.

What kind of knowledge is it and how to increase it? Do we need to spend long hours in libraries looking for all pieces of this knowledge? No apostle gives us different steps to increase it. Step zero is to reject corruption of this world coming from various kind of lusts. Next step is to develop faith, virtue, knowledge.

Here you go. We have knowledge mentioned temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity or love. If we have all these things from the list, it will make us that we are not neither barren or unfruitful. If we stop reading here, we could understand that we would be ready to do great things, and maybe we would find ourselves busy with work that would bring a great benefit for our brethren and great satisfaction for us. The sentence doesn't end here, but it seems that translators have some difficulty with the rest of the sentence because we have quite different renditions of it.

Here are some King James if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Charles Thomson for this being in you an abounding dispose you to be neither idle nor unfruitful to the acknowledging of our Lord Jesus Christ. Phillips if you have these qualities existing and growing in you, then it means that knowing our Lord Jesus Christ has not made your lives either complacent or unproductive. There be for these things exist abounding in you, make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful as regards to knowledge of our Lord Christ Jesus, a voice in wilderness. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the full true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As far as I understand this translation and also a few Polish translations, there are three possibilities here. You will be active and productive, proclaiming Jesus Christ. You will be active and productive in Christ's service. Whatever this service involves, you will be active and productive, getting true knowledge about Christ and His character. I'm partial to this third option and here's why.

We can know who Jesus Christ is and all details about his work of salvation. But if we are not able to be forgiving and merciful we won't be able to be like Christ. We will know everything about him, but we won't be able to follow Him. The true knowledge of Jesus Christ is ability to follow in his footsteps. Have similar love, compassion, and willingness to help as he had.

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Only then we can say that we have true knowledge of our Lord. When we are able, at least to some extent have the same emotions looking at other people as he had, we will be active and productive because we will have similar motivation as our Lord had. We will possess patience and brother kindness because we will be directed by love as our Lord.

Maybe you remember that I put all these features that we should develop listed in verses five to seven in the single second step after faith. Shouldn't we have eight steps here? Doesn't Apostle tell us develop one thing first and then when you have it, add it to the another one? I think that Apostle Peter didn't have a specific order on his mind when he wrote this fragment. Is there any particular reason why we would need work on our temperance and patience after we accomplish developing our knowledge?

And when we study to increase our knowledge, are we free to lose our patience and temperance because we are busy attaining the knowledge?

We also remember that our new commandment that we learned at the very beginning of our Christian way is love one another. Shouldn't love be at the very beginning of this list? I think that it is very difficult to single out just one thing to develop, and in reality we develop all of them at the same time to a different degree, and probably that was the Apostle Peter's intention. He says, here are things that you have to possess if you want to know and be able to follow our Lord.

What if we are so busy with other things that we don't have time to think about it and truly work on the development of those things? Well, the answer is surprising.

But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. This translation suggests that we can be blind and short sighted at the same time, and probably symbolically. It is possible, but Phillips gives us a most likely meaning of this verse. The man whose life fails to exhibit these qualities is short sighted. He can no longer see the reason why he was cleansed from his former sins.

That person is sure sighted because he see clearly only material things of this world that are close to him, and he cannot see anymore the spiritual goal that he had at the beginning of his spiritual path. He was cleansed from his former sins to have foundation upon which he can build A new construction. The building blocks of that construction are all those qualities that Apostle Peter lists in verses 5 to 7. If this construction is not continued, the spiritual goal is no longer attainable.

There are few possible outcomes when the person stops this construction. He can leave fellowship, or he can become inactive, not attending the meetings but still being around, or he could still want to be active, trying to promote this way as a new and improved version of Christianity, which is Christianity without requirement for spiritual improvement. On the other hand, if someone diligently work on this construction, he can be sure of God's appreciation and reward. As we read in verse, verse verses 10 and 11.

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you. For as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble. For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. We have this assurance from Apostle as long as we practice these things, that is, as long as we diligently work and and gather on those listed qualities, we won't stumble because this work will change our mind and our character to such a degree that this will give us special kind of protection, and at the end we will be invited to eternal kingdom of our Lord.

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This is very important for the apostle to make sure that everybody understands that the full knowledge of our Lord depends on the development of other qualities of our character from which love is the most important. He writes in verse 12.

Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them and have been established in the truth which is present with you.

And if someone would ask, but how do we know that what you are saying is true? Next verses bring this answer in my shortened rendition. Let me see if I have this, okay?

Apostle Peter says, I myself and other apostles witnessed transfiguration of our Lord. We all heard voice coming directly from God himself and assured us that Lord was His only Son. We heard Moses and Elijah talking to our Lord. So we know that what he did was the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies. We know that.

We know what we are talking about. You can believe us. That's my rendition. After that assurance, the apostle emphasizes the importance of prophecies and says in verses 20 and 21, but you must understand this at the outset that no prophecy scripture arose from an individual's interpretation of the truth. No prophecy came because of man wanted it to.

Men of God spoke because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. We learned that since prophecies were given to prophets by Holy Spirit.

They have to be interpreted in the special way, but we don't have explanation what it means. It could mean that the interpretation also is given to God himself through His Holy Spirit at the time of the apostle. Indeed, there were gift of prophecy and those who had it probably could convey new prophecies, but also interpret those that were written a long time ago. We don't have that kind of gift today and we rely on our understanding guided by the Holy Spirit. We trust that we are guided by the Holy Spirit, but we only wish that apostle would write a few more sentences about this subject.

After writing about those things that are the most important for our spiritual growth, the apostle changes topic and writes about something that he considers as a most dangerous thing for a relatively young Christian fellowship. These are false teachers who promote false doctrines. These are not sophisticated theological doctrines, but from what we understand, they influence mostly Christian morality.

The apostle writes about them in the second chapter, starting from the first verse. I will display the text, but I won't read it. He starts telling us that as in Israel there were also false prophets, so Christianity also would have their own false prophets and teachers. As we mentioned previously, those are probably Christians who would decide that growing in knowledge of Christ by developing necessary character attributes is too difficult for them. But they still would like to play a role of teachers in the Christian church.

Their teaching probably included idea of false liberty and possibly taken for misinterpreted letters of Apostle Paul that would be liberty to lead sinful life without any consequences.

Further, in the second chapter we find additional description that includes more details of their moral decay. The apostle warns also that those of Christians that didn't separate themselves from the world far enough could be receptive to this due message. Scriptures at the beginning of the

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chapter use the future tense, whereas verses in the middle of the chapter use the present time, suggesting that it is probably already ongoing problem. But maybe those who promote this kind of lifestyle are not yet elevated to the position of the church teachers, and that would come later, when this kind of ideas would be more acceptable in the Christian fellowship.

Verses 20 and up describe what happens to those people. They start as Christians, reject the worldly life, but cannot stay on the path of the righteousness and fall back to the life that they led before that defeat hardened them and they cannot admit that they are wrong. They rather would say that their first conversion was not needed and that their current lifestyle is the good one and acceptable by Christ. It is of course not true, but this way of finding justification for themselves could find Followers who would also have similar problems, and when this group is big enough, they can establish their own ecclesia and try to influence other Christians.

Of course this is not accepted by God. The Apostle Peter tells the Church that the judgment for this group is coming, and it is as sure as past judgments of disobedient angels or the fire judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

It is interesting how Apsal Peter starts the new part of his letter for us. This is the third chapter for Apostol. This could be another fragment of the papyrus, but we get the impression that this was written after a longer break, maybe a few days, and here it is not just continuation of the same subject, but rather a new separate letter with need for proper beginning and repeat things already written before in slightly different way. We learn that this is a second letter written to those brethren, and the purpose is to repeat again things that they already know from prophets and from other apostles.

And then he writes about last days, and we, reading from our, and from our perspective, we can think that he changed subject and now writes about things that would happen in long in long future. But this is not necessarily so. From his first letter we know that Breden and Peter expected that time of the end and the second coming quite relatively in short time.

And we remember that when he started writing about false teachers, he used the future tense. If we connect these things together, we could assume that when he wrote about these false teachers in the future tense, he could think about last days, and those teachers from the second chapter are now called mockers or scoffers in other renditions and now are mentioned in the third chapter. What would be the reason for them to say that second coming won't happen?

It looks like it is related to the promises, related to the second presence. Scoffers reject the promise of the coming. But it is probably related to the fact that this second presence had two additional promises. It is a great reward for those who are faithful, but also a time of judgment and punishment for sinners. Apostle Peter already mentioned this coming judgment and also the fact that those false teachers would for sure find themselves in this judgment.

We could imagine the arguments between those who are still faithful who would say, this sinful life that you promote is unacceptable. Aren't you afraid of judgment of Lord himself when he comes again? And the answer of false teacher would be what coming again? Don't you see that nothing has changed on this world for a long time? Our number is growing.

And we think that this is because Lord bless us, and this is the order of Things that will continue for a long time.

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Apostle Peter doesn't accept this argument at all. He points out that God has quite a different way of measuring time that we humans do. When he says that time is not the same with the Lord as it is with us. To Him, a day may be a thousand years, and thousand years only a day. He emphasizes that patience of God is different than that of humans.

The first world had more than thousand years of existence, and many people at that time said probably the same things when they heard Noah calling for repentance. Nevertheless, flood came and destroyed everything. The same is true about the present world. The time of the judgment is set, and the fact that we don't know when this will happen doesn't change anything. It will come as surely as the flood which destroyed the first world.

Before, Apostle Peter emphasized importance of prophecies, and now he says that this present world is by God's word kept for the fire. Do we know any prophecies that would tell us about this fire? I found one prophecy that tell us very directly about fire destroying the earth.

This is Zephaniah 3, 8. Therefore wait for me, declares the Lord, for the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out, and then my indignation, all my burning anger, for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of my zeal. Apostle Peter could also think about parable of the Tars. This is find in Matthew, chapter 13, verses 41 to 40 42.

The Son of Man will send forth his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all stumbling blocks, all those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of. Gnashing of teeth. Zephaniah 3:8 Tell us that this is God himself who will judge the earth with fire. But Apostle Peter connects that fire with the second coming in verse 10.

Yet it remains true that the day of the Lord will come as suddenly and. Okay, let me.

Okay. Yet it remains true that the day of the Lord will come as suddenly and unexpectedly as thief. In that day the heavens will disappear in a terrific tearing blast, and the very elements will disintegrate in heat, and the earth and all that is in it will be burned up to nothing.

Okay, I think that.

Sorry, I got synchronization wrong.

The Philip rendition says that the earth and all that is in it will be burned up to nothing, and many Christians believe that this is what would literally happen to our earth. However, verse 13 tell us true, this day will mean that the heavens will disappear in fire and the elements disintegrate in fearful heat. But our hopes are set not on these, but on the new heaven and the new Earth which he has promised us, in which nothing but good shall live. We saw that Apostle Peter looks for confirmation in Old Testament prophecies.

Can we find any prophecy that would tell us about destruction of the planet Earth and possible relocation to other other planet or the new planet, which would be this new Earth that Apostle Peter mentioned? No, we cannot find it. If the flood destroyed the civilization of the Earth, and that's supposed to indicate what happens with the second present world, we have to understand that fire will destroy current civilization as we know it. Without any destruction of the planet, the same planet Earth will be used to create a new world where nothing but good will live. Having verses 11 and 12

still on the screen, let's read them now.

In view of the fact that all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be? Surely men of good and holy character who live expecting and earnestly longing for the coming of the day of God. We like to quote verse 11 and use it in all sorts of titles because it urges brethren to examine and prepare themselves for the coming day of God, which will be day of reward for them if they are faithful. This verse has some kind of hidden urgency in it. What if I would read it like this?

In view of the fact that in 2000 years all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be? That's not what Apostle Peter wrote. But this is what happened when with this verse, I think that we agree that urgency disappears, but it shouldn't. We don't have thousands of even hundreds of years in front of us. We have only length of our life and we don't know how many years we have.

What if we get sick or have an accident? If our life ended in two years, would would we be ready? In this third chapter we receive many information about judgment of this present world and about new Earth and new Heaven. All of that thanks to scoffers and false teachers. Apostle Peter didn't intended it as a separate topic, but wanted to prove how wrong these people are.

And this is why we could learn so many other things. But what about those false teachers? Is it closed chapter and we don't have them today at all? Or quite opposite? We should still be expecting.

We should be especially cautious about them, about to whom we listen and what ideas we accept. I would like to Read part of article describing state of today's Christianity written by someone from other Christian group.

Christianity is a complicated religion with a history that spans over 3,000 years. Christianity ties together ancient Judaism, Second Temple judgment Judaism, Greek thought, the Roman Empire, and writings from thousands of different people across multiple languages, all trying to describe the nature and story of God. If you don't get that from your weekend church, then you are likely going to a reductionist church. Modern Christianity is all about ignoring the complicated, phasing out and uncomfortable and boiling down the religion to a tiny fraction of what it actually is. This does a disservice to believers and it harms people's ability to come to Christ.

Truly, Christianity is complicated. It is beautiful, but it is complicated, and denying that only sets people up to fail. What is Reductionist Christianity? Reductionist Christianity is a form of Christianity that has been watered down to its most basic concepts.

Churches that participate in this type of Christianity do not touch tough subject and they are almost entirely focused on people getting to heaven. Reductionist Christianity breaks the religion down into three parts. People are sinners, Jesus died for sins, believe in Jesus and go to heaven.

Some take it one step further and throw in the idea that God will do good things or bless devout believers. Reductionist churches rarely preach from large sections of the Bible and instead focus on few choice verses to support their opinion. They blend in ample amounts of self help to keep the sermons flowing because they aren't preaching on the whole, but rather just this very small silver of religion.

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Modern Americans are turning away from Christianity in droves. They say that Christianity is outdated and that it no longer has answer for them. This is likely because they believed in a truncated and incomplete version of Christianity. The Bible is filled with hard truth and stories that illustrate the complicated nature of God. Without that background, it is easy to wonder why God does this or that or lets people suffer.

Many reductionists love to quote the verse from James that God is love, but they leave it at that. Certainly God is love, but the problem is that God is not solely love. Most people don't have a complete understanding of the nature and character of God because they never learn it in church. In reductionism, God is love, grace is cheap and there are no real standards anymore. But there are parts of God's character that need to be understand so that Christians can be equipped to deal with modern life and modern naysayers.

From this text and from our own observation, we can conclude that the problem with false teachers exists today to the much larger degree than it was at the time of Apostle Peter so we will do well if we hear this advice and be really careful and examine things that we accept and people that we accept as our teachers according to rule given us. In the first chapter, brethren, I tried to present main topics of the second letter of Apostle Peter and wasn't able to mention all of them. So I hope that this consideration would encourage you to study this letter yourself. For closing, let me read two last verses of this letter as a final advice and encouragement of Apostle Peter for us all.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard, so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled man, and fall from your own steadfastness by grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. Thank you.