

2 PETER

2 Peter – A Fruitful Knowledge of God

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, June 30, 2024
PASSAGES	2 Peter 1; 2 Peter 2; 2 Peter 3
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:55:42 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

We are saved by grace through faith — never by virtue, never by self-control. But Peter says to make every effort to supplement that faith anyway, because the same small choices that build a marriage or wreck one will guard a relationship with God or leave it exposed. The safeguards are not the foundation. They are the fence around it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Peter's letter opens by telling ordinary, forgotten Christians that their faith is of equal standing with an apostle's. That includes you.
- ◆ The stakes come before the guardrails: God has granted everything for life and godliness, and called us into his own glory, so that we become partakers of the divine nature. The safeguards exist because that is what is being protected.
- ◆ Virtue, knowledge, self-control and steadfastness do not build the faith. You build on one foundation only — but you can put a fence around it, with barbed wire if you like, so nobody wanders your workers off the site.
- ◆ The danger of lacking them is not merely unfruitfulness. It is forgetting that you were cleansed — living as a slave when you are a child.
- ◆ Peter's fury is aimed at teachers who know better. Not people struggling with an addiction; people who could hear from God, like Balaam, and misled anyway for a prize.

- ◆ The false teachers' advantage is that they are excellent talkers. Peter's advantage is that he was there — an eyewitness on the mountain, relaying plain speech he did not invent.
- ◆ They promise freedom and hand out slavery. "For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved."
- ◆ Almost nobody leaves in one afternoon. It is a slow fade — and you can do the whole thing without ever missing a Sunday.

► 0:55:42

Matt picked up where Cosmo and Susie Reigns had just left off, with their workshop on learning what actually makes the people closest to you feel loved. He wanted the analogy, not the topic. In movies, big characters make big choices. In life, it is the small ones — today, tomorrow, here and there — that decide where you end up.

Little choices, compounding

► 0:59:08

He started with the easiest version: stay up late, eat the ice cream, feel sluggish in the morning, drink the extra coffee, decide to take it easy tonight — and taking it easy looks like more ice cream. The choices compound, and the further down that road you get, the less you want water and a jog.

Marriages work the same way. People in a bad place ask how they got there, and the honest answer is rarely one catastrophe. "It's a lot of little choices here and there on a regular basis that can lead you to a place of great health or great unhealth," Matt said — and the road runs both directions. However far down it you are, the way back is also small choices, made over and over.

Why the letter gets spicy

► 1:00:48

That is the doorway into 2 Peter, a letter many people find hard to read because Peter is so plainly furious. The connection is exactly the one above: in chapter one he pleads with the church to add virtue and goodness and self-control to their faith, because that is how a covenant is protected — daily, in small increments. His rage in chapter two is aimed at the people picking those increments off one by one, appealing to desire. That is why the language is strong. Influence pulling in the wrong direction has to be dealt with strongly.

► 1:02:04

The first thing Peter does is level the ground. He writes to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours — and Peter is a large and looming figure in the early church. Most of the people who first read that letter are names nobody remembers. Their faith stood equal with his. So does yours.

The stakes, before the guardrails

► 1:03:22

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature.”

2 PETER 1:3–4 ↗

Matt lingered here on purpose, because if this were not in the scriptures you would not accept it. Called into his own glory. Granted his precious promises. Made partakers of the divine nature. It arrives through knowing him — this is a relationally oriented faith — and the destiny it opens is larger than resting in the tranquil halls of eternity. His picture for it was deliberately odd: like a positive version of a parasite, or a vampire with the negative connotations stripped out. His flesh and blood are real. We live and grow and persist by feeding on his life, grafted into his own body.

A fence, not a foundation

► 1:05:13

Which is what makes verse five a hinge rather than a lurch — *for this very reason*.

“Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 PETER 1:5–8 ↗

Matt flagged something easy to skate past: knowledge is not first and is not counted as a virtue on its own. Peter wants the two chained together.

► 1:06:30

Then the image that carried the whole message. Imagine a foundation. You must not build on anything else, not on part of it, not on it and something else. That does not mean you cannot put a fence around it — “you can even have barbed wire on that fence if you want, armed guards,” he said, “but it doesn’t mean you’re building somewhere else. It means you’re protecting that place.”

So: virtue, so vice does not draw you out. Knowledge, so you are not caught unawares and led off foolishly. Self-control, because you will be enticed in whatever way the enemy can think of. Steadfastness, because you may simply grow tired. None of it is load-bearing. We are saved by grace through faith, not by grace and self-control.

► 1:08:47

And the failure mode is worse than a thin harvest.

“Whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” Unfenced, you are open to being misled so thoroughly that you forget you are free — believing lies, feeling like a slave to sin, convinced you do not belong to him. Peter is not protecting fruitfulness here. He is protecting people from falling away outright.

Eyewitnesses, not orators

► 1:11:02

Peter’s counterattack opens quietly with a contrast you might miss:

“We did not follow cleverly devised myths” — as opposed to people who did. Paul had the same problem in Corinth. Ancient writers like Philo of Alexandria grumbled about the whole travelling class of men who were magnificent at talking and made a living at it, city to city, on word salad that sounded wonderful.

Matt asked the room to feel the position that puts a pastor in. A silver-tongued man joins your fellowship, says “brother, I have a word,” and when he finishes you cannot say what it was about — and worse, your own people are nodding along. “Imagine how mad you would be, and how random you would seem to the people who love that guy.”

► 1:12:38

“We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.”

2 PETER 1:16–18 ↗

That is the transfiguration — [Matthew 17](#), [Mark 9](#), [Luke 9](#) — where Peter, stunned and in over his head, offers to build tabernacles. “We tease Peter,” Matt said, “but honestly I probably would have said something even dumber.” Which is rather the point. These are not men who agreed on a story in a back room. They are men who saw something larger than life and are relaying it in plain speech — a real disadvantage, when the counterfeit comes with spectacular delivery.

► 1:14:51

Hence Peter’s claim about where prophecy comes from:

no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. For God had an actual goal and an actual message. There is a right reading and a wrong one; it is not a field for opinion and convenience. Matt caught the buried hint in Peter’s “morning star” — Balaam, who saw a star coming out of Jacob, and who genuinely heard from God and chose to mislead people anyway, for a prize. A pointed allusion, and Peter has clearly been stewing on it.

Three examples, and none of them go well

► 1:17:15

“False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them... And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.”

2 PETER 2:1–3 ↗

The corruption is hidden, because the words are sweet. Peter does not reconstruct their messages, but you can reverse-engineer the appeal: being well liked, being wealthy, power, influence, freedom to indulge a vice with a spiritual-sounding excuse. What they are exploiting is that God’s people are trusting and want to believe the best.

► 1:19:41

Then the precedents.

Angels who sinned, cast into chains of gloomy darkness; the ancient world spared only in Noah. Matt noted that “hell” there is a verb built on *Tartarus* — in Greek myth, the maximum-security wing beneath Hades, guarded by things with fifty heads, where the Titans were shut away. He enjoyed the detour and then made it earn its place: even beings with access to glory, when they deviated, were imprisoned. And Sodom and Gomorrah turned to ashes, with Lot pulled out of it. God has confronted false prophets, and false angels, to preserve his people from corrupting influence. Peter’s message to these teachers is not subtle: he got them, he will get you.

► 1:22:04

Matt drew a line under who is in view. Not the person saying *I am struggling with this and I want to stop*. These are men who super duper know better, bold and willful, blaspheming glorious ones that even angels will not pronounce judgment against — and leading people astray by the bushel.

“These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm... They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.”

2 PETER 2:17–19 ↗

That last line is the whole con in one sentence. And it explains chapter one backwards: if the attack comes through the passions, then godliness, virtue and self-control are exactly the block. Why not just name the man? Because there will be another, and another. It was never about the guy.

► 1:25:47

Better never to have known the way of righteousness than to turn back from it — and then the proverb about the dog and its vomit, which Matt offered, deadpan, as tattoo material.

The scoffers and the fire

► 1:27:13

Chapter three turns back to the church. Scoffers will come, asking where the promise of his coming is — behind which sits a widespread conviction that the physical world simply always has been and always will be, so nothing you do gets judged. Peter answers with the flood: things have not always continued as they are.

► 1:29:13

Then the reason for the delay, which is not indifference.

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

2 PETER 3:9 ↗

Matt did the arithmetic on a thousand years as a day — “so by that reckoning it’s been about two days” — and admitted it was not a very funny joke. What follows is anything but: the heavens passing away with a roar, the heavenly bodies dissolved, everything done on the earth exposed. God uncreates and then recreates. And the point Peter draws is a practical one:

since all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be? We are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells — and the waiting itself is meant to be productive: at peace, without spot or blemish, longing for his just judgments and wanting the master to return.

He noted the aside where Peter admits some things in Paul’s letters are hard to understand, and could not decide whether it is a jab or an observation. Either way it shows Paul’s letters already treated as Scripture — and already being twisted. Not a modern invention. We just have better technology for it now.

The slow fade

► 1:33:11

Matt closed where he began. Some of the people in the churches Peter and Paul planted heard the gospel, received it, walked with the Lord — and turned away. Not, he suspects, in one fell swoop. A predator separates the isolated and the hurting from the pack, and the same sequence runs in a spiritual life. You stop confessing your sins. You detach relationally while still standing in the building. Or you stay home and say you are watching, and it is on in the background while you are actually listening to *Crocodile Dundee*. Then when you are down, there is nobody reminding you who you are, and a sweet-sounding voice says that thing over there will not hurt you.

“I call that the slow fade,” he said, “because it wasn’t just one day that they faded out of the household of God. It’s like they’re getting a little more ethereal, a little less there over time.” You can complete the entire process without missing a service — saying and doing all the right things while your heart is somewhere else. A congregation can do it together, in lock step.

► 1:35:30

What these influences want is to isolate you, sideline you, and pour you into endless pointless side projects — anything but Christ. It might be self-help. It might be something genuinely noble-sounding.

Against that, Peter's answer is the fence: virtue against the vices that entice, knowledge so that impressive nonsense cannot land, self-control because those passions burn, steadfastness because one unchanging gospel year after year will bore people who want a new thing. Practice them, and you will not fall — or forget who you really are.

► 1:40:47

His final instruction was to ask, right there in the room: Holy Spirit, show me what influences are on me now, appealing to my cravings, offering freedom and handing me slavery. And then let him teach you where to add virtue, godliness and self-control. It ends where Peter ends —
“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- 2 Peter 1:1–2
- 2 Peter 1:3–4
- 2 Peter 1:5–8
- Ephesians 2:8
- 2 Peter 1:9
- 2 Peter 1:10
- 2 Peter 1:16
- 2 Peter 1:16–18
- Matthew 17
- Mark 9
- Luke 9
- 2 Peter 1:19–21
- Numbers 24:17
- 2 Peter 2:1–3
- 2 Peter 2:4–5
- 2 Peter 2:6–9
- 2 Peter 2:17–19
- 2 Peter 2:20–22
- 2 Peter 3:3–4
- 2 Peter 3:8
- 2 Peter 3:9
- 2 Peter 3:11–13
- 2 Peter 3:15–16
- 2 Peter 3:18

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where have small choices quietly compounded in your life lately — in either direction? What was the first one?
2. Peter puts the stakes before the safeguards: called into God's own glory, made a partaker of the divine nature. What difference does it make to hear that before being told to make every effort?
3. Of the fence posts Peter names — virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, love — which one is missing from your fence right now, and what is getting in through the gap?
4. Matt described a slow fade you can complete without ever missing a Sunday. Who in your life would notice if you started it, and have you given them permission to say so?
5. Ask what Matt asked the room: what influence is appealing to your cravings and offering freedom it cannot give? What is one thing you will do about it this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8futALCs8o&t=3342s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.