

Monday Evening Bible Reading Notes: 2nd Peter

As explained in the first set of notes on the Letters, this letter did not easily find a place in the Bible; and there are good reasons for thinking that it was not written by Peter, and was the last New Testament writing. It is short on doctrinal detail. However, it is well worth reading; and it challenges false thinking that was threatening the Church at that time, and is by no means absent now. Specifically, it attacks the ideas that any Second Coming is too far off to worry about, the world is past saving or indeed reforming, and you can do what you like “in the flesh” because God has chosen you as a spiritual being. (God will forgive all your sins, so why bother trying to avoid sinning!) As we have noted before, putting the name of a religious leader on a book you wrote was perfectly OK at that time. It is quite possible that whoever wrote this trenchant orthodoxy was responding to destructive heresy written in Peter’s name.

April 14th: Host David, Lead Andy: 2 Peter 1: Experience with God is life-changing. The ONE who invited us into God. Don’t lose a minute in building on what you’ve been given. Complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness and generous love. [Score yourself on these?!] Mature in your experience of our Master Jesus. The Transfiguration is recalled. The rising of the Morning Star in your hearts. The one light you have in a dark time.

Note that Peter rates his fellow Christians with himself: Gentile outsiders now very much God insiders. The crystal clarity about Jesus being God is quite rare in the New Testament. SLAVE of God is a title of pride, despite the painful reality of what human slaves of human masters suffered. (“Servant” sounds much less demanding!) We have huge potential; but we need to work at it, not just sit back and relax. We are on a journey of learning and improving. Think hard about this. It is so easy to think we have arrived, made it to the top, and can just take things easy now. Get your GCSE’s and stop learning; finish your apprenticeship, and stop improving; produced beans on toast, and shut the cook book; find the on-switch for your computer, and chuck away the manual.

How do we build on what we have? Is the constant journey a bit discouraging? Isn’t life difficult enough without our wanting to keep progressing? Are we up to getting to 90, and thinking “OK, what next?”

April 28th: Host David, Lead Hannah: 2 Peter 2: There will be lying religious teachers among you. A crows of mixed up followers who can’t tell right from wrong. God knows how to rescue the godly from evil trials. Their specialty is greed. Better not to have started out on the straight road to God than to start out and then turn back (?). A dog goes back to its own vomit.

Some of this chapter is a bit obscure, particularly if you are not really into angels fallen or otherwise. Perhaps one thing to hang onto is that sometimes the church member needs to challenge the church: its behaviour or its teaching. Not everything done by or in the name of the Church has been worthy of the Church, A current/recent example is slavery in its slavery of human to human form. It was justified at the time by the reality that this was the society norm. But that is not a convincing justification. The treatment of un-married mothers is another painful example. At times, the Church has sided with the powerful people rather than the needy people; or put nationalism before all peoples are equal.

May 5th: Host David, Lead Miranda: 2 Peter 3: With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day. Everything here today might well be gone tomorrow. Daily expect the Day of God. Do your very best to be found living at your best. Grow in grace and understanding of our Master and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Peter says Paul is sometimes hard to understand, and can be misunderstood. I guess Faith versus works could be one example; and the place of women another example – though with both of these selective quotation is often the real problem? I struggle a bit with the idea that we ought to do good and not to do bad because Jesus might return at any time. I prefer to think in terms of doing good because it is good, and not doing bad because it is bad. Or, if you prefer, because God knows what you are doing or failing to do. He doesn't have to wait until Judgement Day to notice!

When is patience a vice rather than a virtue???