


The Rock of Our Faith

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and promise keeper, Jesus Christ, amen.

Have you heard of Dwayne Johnson. He started his career as a professional wrestler after his dream of playing in the NFL failed to materialize. He was a 10-time world wrestling champion and dominated wrestling until his retirement from the sport in 2013. Since 2001, he's starred in nearly 50 movies. You probably better know him as "The Rock."  (SLIDE) His movies include The Mummy Returns, The Fast and The Furious franchise where he starred in 6 of their 10 big screen movies. He's starred in everything from disaster movies like San Andreas to fantasy movies like DC Comic's League of Super Pets. He's appeared in 19 TV shows like That 70s show and hosted Saturday Night Live 6 times (back when that show was still funny). He's even had his likeness appear in 44 video games. It's fair to say going from Dwayne Johnson to "The Rock" elevated his popularity and helped make him the household name he is today.

Today's scripture is from the second letter bearing the name of Peter, the apostle and disciple of Jesus Christ. Peter was one of the first disciples called by Jesus. He was invited to leave his fishing business and become a Fisher of Men.



(SLIDE) His name at the time was Simon, but Jesus famously changed it to Peter, meaning "The Rock." Even with his new divine name, Peter still had a lot to learn about being a disciple of Jesus and about leadership in this new Jesus

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Movement. Peter was the impulsive, foot in mouth disciple who seemed to say and do whatever came into his head. He acted on some of those, well, less virtuous impulses too. Like the time when Jesus was being arrested and Peter cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Jesus had to remind Peter and others, “...those who live by the sword will die by the sword.” He then healed the man’s ear. Think on that for a moment... Jesus healed the ear of the High Priest’s servant who was sent to help in his arrest. What does that one action tell us about how we should treat our enemies, even those who want to see us arrested or even killed?



(SLIDE) Let’s get back to this letter we call Second Peter. Not much attention has been given to this book even though there’s still much not known. The bits scholars have written about the book aren’t in agreement even on basic issues like who wrote it. The majority of scholars believe it was written by a disciple of Peter, probably a second-generation believer. Some say it was written by Peter’s scribe or secretary, Mark; the person many believe wrote the Gospel of Mark. One thing most scholars agree on is there are two basic themes to the letter. First is to remind the recipients of the grace given to them in the faith they received through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We’ll talk more about that in a minute...



(SLIDE) The second purpose or theme is for Peter to actually give

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his final testament, including his vision for the future and his final admonishments to the Jesus followers reading his letter and all those who would come after.

The portion of 2nd Peter we read today includes the greeting common to all ancient letters. The author states he is Peter who is a servant of Jesus Christ. This gives the readers his credentials. The letter is addressed to all those who have faith, but not just any faith, to those with a faith as precious as the faith of Peter and the other Apostles. We're not talking about just any old faith or belief system, we're talking about the faith that comes from the righteousness of God. In other words, not something we can conjure up on our own, no matter how hard we pray or how many times we attend church services, or even how much money you donate. This faith comes to us as a precious gift from God himself, the same God who inspired Jesus to heal the ear of the man sent to arrest him.

Having established who the letter is written to, the author further defines what this great gift entails. First, and most importantly, God's gift includes divine




power. This power gives those with faith everything we need for life, but even more for goodness as well. This came as a reawakening for me. I mean, I always understood God's gifts included all the abundance of this amazing planet earth. All the variety of plant and animal life, all the amazing natural wonders like the Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls... What seemed new for me is the idea that God has also given us enough divine power for goodness. The talents and abilities

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we are given by God aren't just for show, they were given to us for good and to do good. I mean, duh... We know Saint Paul famously told the Church located in the town of Ephesus, "For we are God's handiwork, *created in Christ Jesus to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10)

So, having addressed the letter, reminded the readers where their faith comes from and why they were created in Christ, the author moves on to his greater purpose in writing. In ancient times it was common for the patriarch to address his family before his death. Sometimes they blessed their descendants, but the last testament wasn't like our wills are today. The inheritance was spelled out in Jewish Law, so there would be no need for the dying person to spell out who gets the family fortune. In ancient days the last testament was more about summarizing their life's lessons and giving advice for carrying out the patriarch's final wishes. It was much more about legacy than property.


So, what are Peter's final thoughts... After having reminded his readers of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the author begins to answer the question, now what? Now that we've received this precious gift of righteousness from God, now what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to be and act now that we have escaped the lustful desires of the flesh? According to the author of Second Peter, we are called to participate in the "Divine Nature." He describes the Christian life as a sort of Hierarchy of Needs pyramid.  (SLIDE) Faith is


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supported through goodness, from goodness to Knowledge, from knowledge to self-control, from self-control to endurance, from endurance to godliness, from godliness to mutual affection, and from mutual affection to love.


I think we need to spend a minute or two thinking about what our author calls knowledge. The word knowledge is used 5 times in these 11 verses, so it must be an important term for us to understand if we're going to understand what this Peter wants us to know. In Biblical terminology, I think of knowledge in the same way as I do believing. I can believe Jesus Christ lived and taught and had disciples that followed him. I can even believe he was a good man who died an unlawful death at the hands of corrupt religious and governmental officials. I can learn and know about Jesus from reading about him. That's altogether different from believing *IN* Jesus Christ. If I believe *IN* Jesus Christ I trust in his promises and in the saving act of his death and resurrection. I look at what he did and what he spoke when He was alive and I try to learn from Jesus what it means to be truly human and created in the image of God. In the same way there's a world of difference between knowing about Jesus Christ and knowing Him. I mean, the devil surely knows Jesus. The devil believes Jesus lived and even believes Jesus is God's only begotten Son. Satan's knowledge stops right there. Satan doesn't trust in the promises of Jesus nor that his death and resurrection had any impact on Satan or the world. The kind of knowledge of the Lord Peter is talking about

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comes from knowing what makes Jesus tick.  (SLIDE) To know Jesus is to know how Jesus would think, what Jesus would say, and what Jesus would do in any situation. People who are not eyewitnesses to the real time Jesus must rely on the Bible to inform, transform, and conform their minds to the mind of Christ.

To inform, transform, and conform we must do some work. That work involves personal Bible study,  (SLIDE) giving time for contemplation and meditation, leaving space for God to speak. I might read a verse or 2 over and over maybe three or four times. Then I wait... Sometimes an idea pops into my head and sometimes I overhear someone talking and that gives me an idea.

Sometimes it's a week or more later when that Bible verse will inspire me to think about something in a new way. All of those can be the Holy Spirit's way of moving us to where God wants us to be.  (SLIDE) Group Bible study is equally important. When I'm left to my own devices I can make the scripture mean just about anything I want it to mean. It's been used to justify wars, slavery, and even Child sacrifice. The best way to help us all stay on the path to growing in our knowledge of Jesus Christ is to read the Bible devotionally, join in a group Bible study, and finally attend corporate Worship as often as you are able.

We have 2 more Sundays to focus on this under-represented Book of scripture.  (SLIDE) May God use this small book to increase

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our faith in our Lord and may we learn from the apostle Peter the importance of continuous growth in our knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.