

# New Testament Handles

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## 2 Peter

Our task tonight is to grasp hold of all that 2 Peter teaches us – not so much every detail, but the major thrust of its teaching. First, it is helpful to understand what kind of writing 2 Peter is. 2 Peter is to Peter what 2 Timothy is to Paul – his swan song, his final writing, shortly before his “departure” (1:15), which he feels is “imminent” (1:14), something the Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to him.

But much like Paul, rather than waxing eloquent, Peter is a man of both action and practical concern, both addressing the immediate needs of the moment, but also deals with 4 issues that he knows are fundamental for all ages of the church, so that after he is gone (and with him the rest of the Apostles), the church will be able to call at least these 4 things to mind (1:12-15) - READ.

These 4 constitute our NT Handles for 2 Peter, by which we not only grasp the overall teaching of this book, but make us be able to pick up and easily carry with us the lessons learned.

Conveniently these 4 handles come in the way of 2 Reminders (1 general / 1 specific) & 2 Warnings (1 general / 1 specific).

So an outline would look like this...

General Reminder (1:1-15)  
Specific Reminder (1:16-21)

General Warning (2:1-22)  
Specific Warning (3:1-18)

### NT Handles

#### Handle #1 – 1:1-15 – General Reminder: Faith’s 7 Fruits

Peter endeavors in his opening section to lay out 7 qualities that we are to “supply” to our life of faith. Peter is clear that these are gifts from God to us, and yet we are called upon to “supply” these things to our faith with all “diligence” (v. 5). READ v. 2-11

There is a lot being said here... Let me crack open this paragraph, by pointing out the key that ties it all together... It is the Greek neuter plural nouns / pronouns in this paragraph. It is a unique construction that just kind of “pops out” of the paragraph, just like if someone said “ain’t” 10x in one long diatribe..., and thus it is Peter’s way of tying this all together.

Let me show them all to you... v. 3.4.4.8.9.10.12.15

And bracketed between v. 4, 8 is the list of what “these” are...

- Virtue
- Knowledge
- Self-Control
- Perseverance
- Godliness
- Brotherly Kindness (philadelphia)
- Love (agape)

Combined together in a Christian's life, these 7 are just this super bowl of spiritual fruit. These things were "granted to you" initially at your salvation (v. 3,4), and then you in turn "supply" these things to your faith (v. 5). As the falcon supplies his master with game, you supply your faith with these things. As you do, not only do you become partakers of the divine nature (v. 4) and are neither "useless or unfruitful" in life (v. 8), but also as you practice them, the entrance into the eternal kingdom will be "abundantly supplied" to you (v. 11).

These are obviously not naturally human works that earn you into heaven, but rather divine works in His children that allow you to "make more certain about His calling and choosing you" (v. 10).

These are the virtues of the Christian life.

### **Handle #2 – Specific Reminder: Scripture's Character**

- Not "cleverly devised tales" (v. 16)
- Eyewitness testimony (16-18)
- Not a matter of one's own interpretation (v. 20)
- Not a product of human will (v. 21)
- Men moved by the Holy Spirit (v. 21)
- "More sure" than even God speaking from heaven (v. 19)
- You do well to pay attention! (v. 19)

All we have is the Scripture, folks! This is what gives us the knowledge of God and the way of salvation. To it we do well to pay attention... as opposed to – what Peter is about to warn of next... (both general and specific).

### **Handle #3 – General Warning: False Teachers' Character (2:1-22)**

God spoke through true prophets in earlier times (some produced Scripture), but there also arose among the people false prophets and false teachers (2:1).

*... just as there will also be among you.*

This is a general warning to all churches of all times. False teachers will always afflict the church, both out of their own sinful heart, and for the divine purpose of testing (Deut 13:1-3, 1 John 4:6).

We need to know their character...

- False teachings (1,3)

- Knowledge of the Bible and Gospel & Claiming to be Christian (1, 20)
- Sensuality (2, 18)
- Greed (3, 14)
- Indulge Flesh / Corrupt Desires (10)
- Despise authority (10), especially reviling spiritual/angelic authority (10-12)
- Hedonistic revelry in the middle of the day (13)
- Cozy up to believers in midst of brotherly fellowship, staining the whole thing (2,13)
- Adultery (14)
- Profit from unrighteous practices (15)
- Arrogant words of nothingness (18)
- Prey on new / immature believers (14,18-19) – primarily by exalting indulging in fleshly desires

So, not only guard yourself, but take special care for the new believers in our midst!!!

It doesn't really matter what particular "falsehood" they are teaching, if they display one or more of these characteristics, beware that those who follow them will be doomed along with them (2:4-9). But also know that even when false teachers abound, the Lord knows how to rescue His own from them (like Noah & Lot!) – 2:5,7,9. See also 1 John 4:4-6!

#### **Handle #4 – Specific Warning: Immediacy – 3:1-18**

Mockers will say (or live as if) the Lord Jesus is not returning in sudden, unexpected cataclysm.

The specific line of reasoning is that the world has never seen such an upending cataclysm as the Apostles teach there will be when Jesus returns (*all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation*). Obviously they are ignorant of the Flood.

This kind of teaching can take several forms...

- Macro-evolutionary understanding of Creation (denying Adam, in effect diminishing Christ)
- Jesus just left us with profound moral principles with which to better society (social gospel)
- There is no final judgment of men, just soul sleep, or annihilation...
- The prophetic pictures of judgment are just metaphoric
- Jesus may "return" secretly, or simply already "returned" by the coming of His Spirit, and thus we need to interpret the Bible metaphorically / spiritually...

End result is all sort of mischief in the church... A theology that softens God and exalts man. A theology that diminishes Scripture, and exalts speculation. A theology that promotes a kind of slackness and easy-going attitude within the church that says "live for today, don't worry about tomorrow." Jesus Himself specifically warned about this kind of attitude (Matt 24:42-51)!

We are to soberly reflect on the "nearness of the end" (1 Peter 4:7), and the reality of final judgment and in the end the only thing that will matter is whether you repent or perish (3:8).

Note: Anyone with basic knowledge of the Scripture could not say 3:4 – for everyone knows of the Flood (God has already judged the whole earth once!). The only way they could get away with something like this is in a church where there is a steady and systematic diminishing of Biblical knowledge among the people.

Yes, 3:16, some things are hard to understand in the Bible, but where there is low Bible knowledge and low Bible respect, the untaught (undisciplined) and unstable (no foundation) tend to distort what is plain to those who have been disciple and are mature in the practice of the Word in their lives.

Again, this gets back to the general and specific reminders above. Incorporate “these things” into your life and give constant and increasing attention to the Word. In this way, you will be able to not only fulfill 3:17-18 for yourself, but be a true Patriot of the Kingdom in assisting others as well.