

Our Precious Faith, Part 1

2 Peter 1:1

61-2

Tonight, let's open our Bible to 2 Peter, chapter 1. We're going back to this marvelous epistle which we introduced last time. I would encourage you, if you didn't get the tape from last time, you probably ought to do that. It was a pretty exciting evening and one that you'll not want to miss, and we can be thankful that it is on tape. But we're going to get into the text a little bit tonight. We just introduced the sort of overall idea that this epistle is written to help us be able to deal with false teachers, apostates and their heresies. Tonight we're going to embark upon a study of the first eleven verses, and we'll just get going a little bit tonight. And we've entitled these first eleven verses of 2 Peter, chapter 1, "Our Precious Faith – Our Precious Faith."

Now, throughout Scripture there are warnings against false teachers. You're very much aware of that, we talk about it from time to time. These false teachers have been around since the very beginning, as it were, attempting to damn souls to hell by beguiling them, by deceiving them with lies masquerading as spiritual divine saving truth. That is always the ploy of false teachers. They are the emissaries of Satan. They are liars who are basically motivated, moved by love of money, love of power, prestige, prominence and so forth, but truly they are the pawns of spiritual entities, namely demons, who lead them to propagate Satanic lies to deceive souls, who will then perish in hell and populate Satan's eternal domain. So this kind of deception has been around. All the way back in the garden you see the beginning of it, where Satan comes in the form of a serpent, attempting to seduce man and woman to turn against God. And he was successful then, and he is still successful with his lying deception.

Now, because this is an age-old problem – false teaching, false teachers, false prophets, false doctrines, heresies and all – because it is a constant problem, in every age, then, God has had His spiritual consumer protection advocates. God has always had those men and women who are around for the purpose of speaking His truth – whether it be a faithful mother who speaks truth to her children, a faithful father who speaks truth to his family, whether it be a prophet, whether it be a priest, whether it be a king, whether it be a judge, whether it be some significant person within the framework of Israel, an elder of the nation, whoever it might be. Or whether it be an apostle, or a New Testament prophet, or a pastor, or a teacher, or an elder, or a deacon, or whoever it might be, there are always those whose calling seems to be to warn about the deceivers and their deception. No one stands out more in the New Testament in such regard than does Peter. Peter is an instrument of God to write this epistle as a warning letter. And it has as its purpose endeavoring to help us to be able to square up against this kind of deception, which is so very prevalent. The letter is for the purpose of exposing, thwarting, and defeating the invasion of false teachers in to the church. It suited that purpose when he wrote it; it still suits that purpose today.

By the way, it is very similar to the epistle of Jude. In fact, a great portion of it is almost repetitive. Jude, too, then, is another of those spiritual consumer protection advocates, whose purpose is to

make sure people don't fall victim to lies and damning heresies. Now, Peter pulls no punches. It is a clear, precise, direct presentation. And in chapter 2 is the heart of the description of the false teachers. And it is a generic description. He never identifies any labeled heresy; he doesn't identify some specific false religion. He doesn't identify some specific false cult, or false system of teaching. It's very generic. But he says this in general about these false teachers: they teach destructive heresies, they tend to deny the Lord Jesus Christ, they twist Scripture to do so. They bring the true faith into disrepute. They despise authority. They are driven by lust and evil desire. They arrogantly slander God's messengers. They are immoral. They are covetous exploiters. They are arrogant. They entice people with sensual pleasure. They promise the good life, but they cannot deliver. They are filthy. Very direct descriptions. He talks about the fact that they have absolutely nothing to offer, even though they pretend to offer everything, that their victims are unstable souls who love all the wrong things, and thus they fall victim to them selling them the wrong things.

Now, there's something very urgent in Peter's heart as he writes, because this is his last letter. You will notice in verse 12 of chapter 1, "Therefore I shall 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 I consider it right as long as I am in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, so also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me." I'm not going to live very long, and if there's one thing I want to do, it's make sure you remember these things. So I will remind you, and remind you, and remind you, so that when I'm gone, you'll have them in mind – these matters regarding false teachers and their deceiving lies.

Now, the terms in this epistle indicate that such false teachers were not just future, but they were already at work. They were already moving among the people to whom Peter wrote. By the way, the ones to whom he wrote were the same ones to whom he wrote in the first epistle. Notice chapter 3, verse 1, "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you," so clearly the first letter was 1 Peter, and this is 2 Peter. Now even though we don't know the exact form of their false teaching, it had already begun among these people to whom he penned these two letters. No specific details behind this letter are revealed, there is no description of this heresy whatsoever. In fact, Peter's purpose here is not to deal with the doctrine of the heretics as much as to deal with their character. He is concerned about the kind of people they are, as well as what they say. But the major thrust of chapter 2 describes them, not their doctrine. All he says about their doctrine is it is damnable, or damning or destructive heresy. He says in chapter 3 about their doctrine that they mock the coming judgment of God. But beyond that he really doesn't say much. So he's more concerned to help us identify the character of their life, because the doctrine may change, but the heretic's character doesn't change. The deceiver's character is the same. And even though we don't know the exact the form of the false teaching that was coming at these people, and even though we don't know specific details about that, we can from this epistle learn how to spot a deceiver, and how to spot his deception.

But more than just being critical, and analytical, and viewing false teaching, this particular epistle has a rather protectionistic perspective. Peter wants to protect the believer. He wants the church to be able to defend itself against this incessant onslaught. By the way, historically the church has had mixed success and failure. For the most part, it seems to me that the church, at the widest possible definition, has fallen victim to deception. And it seems to me that throughout the history of the church, it's always a small remnant that are able to recognize it for what it is and stay true to the faith. That's Peter's concern. His concern is that people not fall prey or victim to the dangerous attack of false teachers. Now, there are basically three defenses you need, and Peter's going to open these

to us. Number one, know your salvation. Number two, know your Scripture. Number three, know your sanctification. Those are the three things you need to know.

Be sure you're saved, that's protection number one, verses 1 to 11. Be sure you're standing with the Lord is settled – that is a major line of defense. Number two, know your Scripture. Starting in chapter 1, verse 12, he moves through to chapter 3, verse 2, and the thrust there is about the Scripture, which was from the Holy Spirit. "We don't follow cleverly devised fables," Peter says, "but we're eyewitnesses, and moved by the Spirit of God, we've written it down. And you better be sure you follow that, and not the destructive heresies of sensual false prophets." So you must know your salvation, you must know your Scripture. Be sure you're saved, number one. Be sure you understand the truth, number two. Protection number three is to know your sanctification. And that is the issue of having to deal with your own holiness. Starting in chapter 3, and verse 3, he moves all the way through, discussing the matter of holiness. In coming to perhaps a climax in verse 14, he says, "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless," and then in verse 18, "Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Now, that middle section which I left out, chapter 2, is the description of the false teachers. We could also say, know your salvation, know your Scripture, and we could throw in know your adversaries. That's really chapter 2. But the three defense lines against them are salvation, Scripture, sanctification. Now, please mark this, will you, in your mind? In each of those three cases, protection against false teachers involves knowing something – it involves knowing something. And if there's a key word in 2 Peter, it would be the word "knowledge." You must know the condition of your salvation, your relationship to God. You must know the Scripture. You must know your spiritual condition in terms of sanctification. That is protection one, two and three. And you must also know your adversary; you must know how to recognize these people. That, of course, is the heart of the epistle in chapter 2. Now, the word "knowledge" then is very prominent in these three chapters. In one form or another, it appears 16 times – 16 times. Six of those times is the intensive form *epiginōskō*, or *epignōsis*. *Ginōskō*, a common Greek word "to know," is made more intense with the addition of *epi*, *epiginōskō*, and typically we've said to you through the years, where you have a preposition added as a prefix to a verb, it intensifies the meaning of the verb. So it is what we know that protects us. We have to know the enemy, and he describes him for us very clearly in chapter 2, how they're going to come, what their character is going to be. We've got to be discerning, and thoughtful, and analytical, and critical, and evaluate them.

But then in order to protect ourselves, we have to know our salvation, we have to know Scripture, and know the condition of our spiritual life. Confidence in our salvation, its resources, the true knowledge of God through Jesus Christ with assurance is the first line of defense. This, beloved, is the helmet of salvation. When Satan comes at you wielding the sword of his false doctrine, wielding the sword that wants to strike a death blow against you, what insulates you and protects you from the fatality of that blow is the helmet of salvation, the protection or the defense of knowing you are saved, knowing you belong to God. Your defense begins with a clear, confident comprehension of salvation relationship to God. And with that in view, Peter spends the opening section on the issue of salvation. We're going to look at it in verses 1 through 11. Here, he wants to remove any doubt. He wants to remove any confusion from the believer, who may be doubting or may be confused about his salvation. He wants him to know where he stands, so that he can stand where he stands. An insecure, doubting, confused Christian will become easy prey for false teachers. Anyone is vulnerable to false doctrine who is, one, not saved or two, not sure of salvation, because you don't

know what you stand on, you don't understand your resources. So comprehending our true spiritual condition with regard to salvation is the first defense against the attack of Satanic error. If you don't know you're in Christ, if you don't know what you are in Christ, then you are easy prey.

Now, the tone for this discussion of salvation comes right off the bat in the greeting. Let's look at verse 1. "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" – or "like precious faith" – "by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Now, before we begin the rich presentation of salvation that starts here in these first two verses, just some introductory thoughts. Notice Simon Peter's name there. The epistle begins with that name, Simon Peter. We end our letters with our name. In ancient times they started with the name, which makes a lot more sense. When I get a letter "Dear John," I know it's addressed to me, I know it's coming to me, don't tell me that again. I always have to look at the end to find out who it's from. They did it right. Simon Peter; both names, by the way, are very important. Simon is the Greek term, Simeon is the Hebrew. And in the ancient manuscripts that we have of 2 Peter, some have Simon and some have Simeon. It was a very common name. It was a name after Simeon, who is the head of one of the tribes of Israel. Simeon or Simon, same name. This name was given to this man from birth. His father named him Simeon, no doubt. The Greek world had identified it as Simon, so in the manuscripts you have both. His own name in its Jewish form, Simeon, would not be enough to identify him. If you just said "Simeon wrote this," they would say, "What Simeon?" Simeon or Simon was as common a name in ancient times as any name.

For example, in the New Testament, nine people other than Peter are called Simon – nine other ones – so the second name is essential. What Simon or Simeon? Well, Simon Peter, he's the one. Peter means rock. In Aramaic – the Greek word Peter means rock – in Aramaic the word is Cephas, so some times he's called Cephas in the Aramaic. He wanted his full identity to be expressed. He wanted everyone to be sure who was writing this. It wasn't Simon Magus, and it wasn't Simon the Just, and it wasn't any of the other seven Simons, it was Simon Peter who wrote this. There's also another note in these two names. Simon was his name before he met Christ, and Peter was his name after he met Christ. Simon was his name of dishonor, and Peter was his name of honor. And because he was so much Simon Peter – in other words, he so often acted like his old self as well as acting like his new self – he never seemed to be able to shake his first name. In fact, when Jesus had caught him in his disobedience, He said to him three times, "Simon, Simon, Simon." He called him by his old name when he acted like his old self in John 21.

This combination, Simon Peter, occurs many times in the New Testament in referring to this man. In the early church, among the Gentiles who spoke Greek, he was commonly called Simon Peter. Read the book of Acts, particularly in chapter 10 and chapter 11. Even the Gentiles called him Simon Peter. John, who wrote his gospel in Asia Minor, refers to him as Simon Peter 17 out of 22 times. So he really got stuck with both names. It would have been nice if he had just become Peter, but he so often acted like his old self that he seemed to always bear his old name. He's a wonderful picture for us because we often act like our old self, too, don't we? I guess that's why we all identify with Simon Peter. Just as comparison, would you please note that the apostle Paul is never called Saul Paul? And he is for some reason or other not quite as real to us as Simon Peter. We're much more comfortable with the man who while being new once in a while acted like he was old. He is Simon when Jesus confronts him in his sin. He is Peter when he preaches with power at Pentecost. And we're all like that.

And so he stands by virtue of his very name as a dramatic illustration of salvation, a fitting guy to be writing on the subject. And he writes here his last legacy, his final letter. He wants the believers to be able to face the onslaught of false teachers triumphantly. He wants them confident in their salvation. He wants them confident in the Scripture, the revelation of God. He wants them confident in the second coming, so that they will live holy lives. Then he further identifies himself, Simon Peter, a bondservant – a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ. Now, there is an excellent balance of humility and authority, humility and dignity; the perfect balance for a spiritual leader. He is a bondservant, first of all. *Doulos*; that means a slave. He says, “I’m a slave.” That puts him in the place of submission. That puts him in the place of duty. That puts him in the place of obedience. That puts him in the place of humility. That puts him on the level with – watch this – all other believers who serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We’re all slaves. We’re all servants. Strange as it might seem, this title of humiliation was borne by the greatest men in the Word of God. Moses, the great leader and law giver, was the servant of God. Joshua, the great commander of Israel, was the servant of God. David, the greatest of the kings, was the servant of God. Paul was the servant of Jesus Christ. James was the servant of Christ. Jude called himself the servant of Christ. According to Amos 3:7 and Isaiah 23, all the prophets of the Old Testament were servants of God, and every believer in the New Testament becomes God’s slave.

So Peter is identifying himself with all of us. He is humble, as Christ’s slave. And though he was the greatest of the Twelve and their spokesman, though he was the greatest preacher of them all and the leader at Jerusalem, he was a slave to Jesus Christ. William Barclay has written, “To call the Christian the slave of God means that he is inalienably possessed by God. In the ancient world a master possessed his slaves in the same sense as he possessed his tools. A servant can change his master, but a slave cannot. The Christian inalienably belongs to God. To call the Christian the slave of God means that he is unqualifiedly at the disposal of God. In the ancient world the master could do what he liked with his slave; he had the same power over his slave as he had over his inanimate possessions. The Christian belongs to God, for God to send him where He will and to do with him what He will. The Christian is the man who has no rights of his own. To call the Christian the slave of God means that the Christian owes an unquestioning obedience to God. To call the Christian the slave of God means that he must be constantly in the service of God. The slave had literally no time of his own, no holidays, no time off, no working hours settled by agreement, no leisure, all his time belonged to the master. The Christian is necessarily the man every moment of whose life and time is spent in the service of God,” end quote.

The slave was well known in that ancient time. And for Peter to say he is a slave of Jesus Christ means he is a humble servant, bound by duty to do whatever his master told him, no matter what the cost. That was Peter. Read John 21; that’s the whole essence of what Jesus wanted from Peter. “If you love Me then do what I tell you – feed My sheep, follow Me, it will cost you your life, but obey Me.” Then he says, turning from humility to dignity, he is also an apostle of Jesus Christ. So while on the one hand, he humbles himself to be the equal of all believers, on the other hand, he represents himself as a spokesman for Christ. This elevates him to the unique office as divinely called and commissioned as a witness of the resurrected Christ, Christ’s personally chosen messenger of the gospel to the place where he speaks officially. The term “apostle” means one officially sent forth, and an apostle of Jesus Christ is one officially sent forth by Jesus Christ. So he had all of Christ’s authority with him. He served, and yet he had authority. He was under Christ, and yet he was the representative of Christ. And there is the model for spiritual leadership – the submissive, sacrificial obedience of a slave joined with the strength, boldness, and courage of an apostle.

Finally, in these little introductory notes, “Simon Peter, a bondservant” – or slave – “and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those” – stop right there. Who are they? “Those.” Well, chapter 3, verse 1, as I noted, said the same ones who received the first letter. If you go back to chapter 1, verse 1, of the first letter you find out who he’s writing to. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those” – there they are again, what those – “those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen.” In other words, the elect church scattered in that Gentile world. We don’t know who they are any more specifically than that. Predominantly Gentiles, but certainly some Jews were also in the fellowship. Probably 2 Peter is written from Rome, as was 1 Peter, and no more than a year later after 1 Peter. Nero died in 68 A.D. Peter died under Nero’s persecution, tradition tells us. Peter probably died before Paul, since Paul wrote his final letter from Rome, and Peter certainly wasn’t there then, so he must have died already. First Peter, around 64; Peter must have died before 68, 67 or so, or 66. And so this was likely penned in around 65, one year after 1 Peter. So it was a prison epistle. He was a prisoner. He was facing death. As I read earlier, chapter 1, verse 14, he says, “I know that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent.” Tradition tells us he was crucified, and he refused to be crucified like his Lord, and he asked to be crucified upside down.

Final words to us from this bigger-than-life man, about how to face false teachers triumphantly; and he begins where he has to begin – the first line of defense is our salvation. Now, he’s going to tell us three things about our salvation – the source of our salvation, the scope of our salvation, and the certainty of our salvation – source, scope, certainty. Let’s look at source, we’ve already seen it. Back to verse 1, “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Now, that identifies this indication of our salvation as to its source. “Who have received – who have received.” This means that our salvation is a what? It’s a gift, isn’t it? We received it. The word is a marvelous word. Not a common word, not a common word. This verb means to obtain by lot. You remember when they cast lots? It was a way in which God could providentially control earthly circumstances to crystal clearly reveal His will. It came to mean “given by an allotment.” It clearly refers to something not attained by personal effort, not attained by personal skill, not attained by personal worthiness, but something that came purely from God, as God controlled the giving of it. In fact, so is it designated in that sense, that most all the lexicons of the Greek language say it means “to attain by divine will.” God used the casting of lots as a way to reveal His will, so it became synonymous. To receive by lot meant to receive by divine will. So Peter is writing to believers who have received their faith because God willed to give it to them. This is marvelous. The same verb is used in Acts 1:17, by the way, if you want to note that.

Now what does he mean by a faith, or faith – “who have received faith?” Does he mean the faith? Does he mean Christianity, its doctrines and its teaching? Or is it not objective but subjective? Is he talking about the power to believe? Well, let me answer it for you. I believe that the best way to understand this is to understand it as subjective. That is to say, he is talking about the power to believe. There would be otherwise no reason to say “who have received faith of the same kind as ours.” If he’s talking about doctrine, of course there’s only one body of doctrine, so you wouldn’t say this person got the same body of doctrine as this person got – there’s only one. But if you mean subjective faith, or the power to believe, to say that this person received from God the same power to believe as this person, now you’ve got something that is sensible. No reason to say the two have the same value if you’re talking about the objective faith, of which there is only one possibility. No, Peter is saying salvation is by faith; that faith comes from God as to its initiation. Saving faith, then, is from God.

Now, listen carefully to this. Back in 1 Peter, chapter 1, he said that we were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Peter started out that first epistle talking about God's side; He elected us. Peter starts the second epistle talking about our side; we believed. But again, it is a faith which is received from God. Faith is the capacity to believe. It is the capacity to trust God. And God gives it. We're back to Ephesians 2:8 and 9, aren't we? "For by grace are you saved through" – what – "faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Salvation, including the faith to believe, is part of the gift of God. According to 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, our minds are blinded so that the light of the glorious gospel cannot be believed. We are held captive in death, according to Ephesians 2. We are servants of the prince of the power of the air, we are children of disobedience headed for eternal damnation. We are dead in trespasses and sin, we are blind in the darkness and cannot see, and if we believe, it is because God has granted to us an allotment of faith. So He gets all the glory.

Even when it comes to the matter of spiritual gifts in Romans 12, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." Faith comes from God. It is measured out and granted to us for salvation and for service. Listen to Ephesians 6:23: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Love, and faith, and peace come from God. Philippians 1:29, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake;" but it has been granted to you by God for Christ's sake to believe. You can't believe unless God gives you faith. First Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 9, again it says regarding the gifts of the Spirit, "To another faith by the same Spirit." The ability to believe for salvation, the ability to believe for service, the ability to believe in intercessory prayer are all given measures of faith that come from God. He is the one who gives this kind of faith. It is not natural human faith that can apprehend salvation. We need to understand that. Don't be confused.

Acts 11:21 says, "And the hand of the Lord was with them and a large number who believed turned to the Lord." Why did they believe? Because the hand of the Lord was there. Now listen carefully to what I say. Human faith exists. You have the power to believe some things, right? So do I. You believe that you can put your keys in the ignition of your car, turn on the engine, firing off all your spark plugs, and you believe your car will not explode. You believe that every time you do that. If you have a V-8, there are eight explosions as soon as your car ignition goes on – eight explosions in a machine full of gasoline. But you believe in whoever made it that it won't blow you up. You have faith to fly in an airplane. I have flown innumerable times with people sitting next to me saying, "I will never understand how this plane stays in the air. Could you explain how it works?" Not only that, you fly in an airplane, and you can't even see the pilot. You have faith to ride in a car on a highway, even though you don't know the road around the bend is going to be there, and not just end with a long drop. You have faith to eat in a restaurant, even though you've never been in the kitchen. You have faith to eat in a restaurant when you have been in the kitchen. See, that's natural faith. That's human faith. It has nothing to do with salvation.

The faith that you have as a human being is not the kind of faith that redeems anybody. That faith that saves is a gift from God. Listen to what Peter said again now in verse 1, "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received faith." First epistle to those who are chosen, second epistle to those who have received faith; the two go together. We're chosen by God, but not without faith, but that faith is a gift. So God initiates faith when the Holy Spirit awakens the dead soul in response to hearing the Word of Christ. So faith comes from God, yet all men are

called on to believe, and those who don't believe are damned forever. What mystery – what mystery. Now, please follow Peter's thought. "To those who have received faith of the same kind as ours." King James says "like precious faith." Same kind, *isotimos*, equal in value, it means. It's used in a political sense, it means equal in rank, equal in position, equal in honor, equal in standing, equal in price in the economic usage, equally valuable, equally precious, equally honored, equally privileged. So what he is saying here is we have all received the same precious, valuable, honored, ranking faith. The faith that we have is equally precious. The spiritual privileges that faith brings are equally precious. Listen to this: no first-class Christians, no second-class Christians. We both have the same faith. That's what Galatians is really saying as Paul writes in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you're all one in Christ Jesus." You came in with an equally precious faith to equally precious privileges.

The root of this word – the root of this word is *timios*, which means honor, value or price. Peter, by the way, loves the word precious. First Peter 1:7, 1 Peter 1:19, 1 Peter 2:7, 2 Peter 1:4, one or the other form of the word precious, he loves that word. Now, what does he mean here? That we have "received faith of the same value" – the same kind – what does he mean – "as ours?" What do you mean "ours?" Well, some say he means – by the way, it's literally "with us" – some say he means the same faith as the apostles. And what he is saying is that though the apostles are uniquely called by God, having seen the resurrected Christ and, of course, had those unique experiences with the Lord Jesus, and while they are blessed as eyewitnesses of that resurrection, and while they were given the gifts of signs and wonders, miraculous powers, while they were privileged recipients of divine revelation, they have no greater a faith, no more precious a saving faith than simple, common, every day, ordinary Christians. They each have the same precious saving faith. Well, I want to hurry up and say that's true – absolutely true. That is absolutely true. But that's probably not what Peter means here, because there are no apostles authoring this letter, just Peter. Why would he say "us"? Down in verse 12, when he does get personal – first place he just says "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle," when he says "with us" he could mean with collectively the apostles, even though they're not there, but that seems to be pressing it. If he had said "with me as an apostle," maybe we would have understood it that way. Down in verse 12, when he does refer to himself, he uses the singular pronoun "I, I, I, my, my, my." So he's not using "us" here in a collective sense to refer to more than one apostle authoring this.

You say, "Well if it isn't with the apostles, then who is he talking about here?" More likely he has in mind the Jewish-

Gentile issue. And what he is saying here is, "You Gentiles," scattered throughout the Gentile world, as identified in 1 Peter 1:1 – "you have received faith of the same value as the Jews" – as ours, as Jews. Now, we can't be dogmatic about this. He could mean collectively the apostles, but in consistency with other things that Peter had taught and experienced, it seems best that he was remarking about this Jewish-Gentile issue. Go with me quickly for a minute back to Acts, chapter 11. Let me show you why I would prefer this interpretation. In Acts 11:17, actually Peter is reporting here about what the Lord did with the Gentiles. Peter had a unique ministry to the Gentiles, as you well know. In verse 15 of Acts 11, Peter reports that the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, just as He did on the Jews at Pentecost. And then in verse 17, he says, "If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" He is saying the Gentiles got the same gift of the Holy Spirit after their believing that we got after our believing. Therefore, they got the same believing; they received the same faith.

Look at chapter 15, verse 8. Verse 6 says the apostles and elders came together to look into this matter in Jerusalem council. There was a lot of debate. Peter stood up and said, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the Word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us; and He made no distinction” – watch this – “between us and them, cleansing their hearts by” – what – “by faith” – same faith. “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples the yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way they also are.” It seems to me that Peter is rather enamored with the sameness of the phenomena of salvation with regard to Jew and Gentile. And when you carry all of that kind of thinking into this epistle, he is saying, “I’m writing to those (Gentiles) who have received a faith of the same precious value as we Jews have received.” The first and second epistle, written to scattered churches in the Gentile world, made primarily up of Gentile believers; the tone is certainly wider than the Jews. The middle wall of the partition is broken down, as Ephesians 2 says. Peter got a very graphic illustration of that in Acts 10 with Cornelius, and the vision he had at his unique encounter with the supernatural. And so he was enamored with this like precious faith that belonged to Jew and Gentile.

This word again, *isotimos*, was particularly used in the ancient world with strangers and foreigners who were given equal citizenship in a city. Josephus, writing about Antioch, says that in Antioch the Jews were given all the rights of citizenship, and they were called *isotimoi*. They were called equals in honor and privilege with the Macedonians and the Greeks who lived there. So Peter is addressing his letter then to these *isotimoi* – you have a faith that is equal. There is no Jew or Gentile. God has given us all the same saving faith. The source of salvation – God. He gave us the faith. And what was the means? “By” – look at verse 1 – “the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ – by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” This phrase also might have several emphases. Listen very carefully. Righteousness can mean justice, it can mean fairness, it can mean equity. So some commentators take it that what he is writing is this: that you Gentiles have received the power to believe, the same precious faith, as we Jews, because God is fair, and equitable, and just, and so He gives the same to both. That’s one possible meaning.

If we take that meaning, it is then saying that God is no respecter of persons, but has given us all fairly the same kind of precious faith to believe in Jesus Christ whether we be Jew or Gentile, and therefore we are ushered in to receiving the same Holy Spirit. We receive the same spiritual privileges because God is equitable; nobody is more worthy than anybody else because nobody is worthy, period. But on the other hand, this marvelous word, righteousness, can also mean the very rightness of God, the very justifying power that God possesses, enabling Him to redeem sinners. In other words, we have faith to believe and we are saved because God’s righteousness is given us; it is the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, imputed to us. It seems that that latter one is more consistent with New Testament teaching that whenever you have salvation linked with the righteousness of God, it is not linked with His fairness or justice or equity, as much as it is linked with His holiness, purity, righteousness in the sinless sense, which is imputed to us, or granted to us, from God in Christ. So we have faith only because God gives it, and we are saved only because he imputes to us righteousness. He grants us righteousness.

This is Paul’s major point. Just quickly, Romans 3:26, “For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” When one puts his faith in Jesus, God-given faith, God justifies. Same word, God makes

righteous. Romans 4:5, “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies” – or makes righteous – “the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.” In the salvation texts of the New Testament, where you have faith and righteousness, the righteousness is not the equity of God, the righteousness is the holiness of God imputed to man. So when God gives you faith to believe, He then gives you righteousness to be saved. It’s only the righteousness of God imputed to you that covers your sin and makes you acceptable to God. That’s his point. God makes us righteous. God grants His righteousness to us. We are clothed with righteousness. In Acts 13:38 and 39, “Let it be known, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you couldn’t be freed through the law of Moses.” When you believe, you’re freed from the penalty of sin. The law of Moses could never do that. That’s the kind of righteousness we’re talking about.

Now notice, please, it is not really the righteousness,, or the justness, or the equity and the fairness of God the Father, but follow this thought. We are receiving the power to believe equally, and then salvation, by the righteousness – now watch this title – of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He’s not talking about God the Father. He is calling Jesus Christ our God and Savior. Righteousness does originate with God, but it flows down to us through Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:8 says, “God will justify the Gentiles by faith,” verse 9, “then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.” Verse 11 says, “the righteous lives by faith.” Again you have righteousness and faith, righteousness and faith connected. Believing and being forgiven, being made just, made right with God. And this following phrase, this description of Jesus Christ, I think, favors the second interpretation. It is the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, that is given to us. By the way, the Greek construction has only one article before “our God” – “of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ” – making it all refer to one person.

Here’s how to understand that phrase – very important. It is one person. Our God is Savior Jesus Christ. Our Savior Jesus Christ is God. That’s all bound up in that – all bound up. By the way, in the four other times that Peter uses Savior, in 1:11, 2:20, 3:2 and 3:18, he always refers to Jesus Christ, always. And here he is calling our Savior, Jesus Christ, God. Try that on your Mormon friends next time they bring up that issue. Our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is God. Any less consideration of Him than that is a denial of His person. Listen to Romans 9:5 for some support. “Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.” Christ is God. Christ is God. Titus, chapter 2, verse 13, “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” Who is appearing? Our God and Savior, Christ Jesus. Hebrews 1:8, “But of the Son he says, ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.’” So it goes. Jesus is God. “For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form,” Colossians 2:9. Listen to this carefully, this is marvelous. What Peter is doing is what he did at Pentecost, in Acts 2:21. He took the Old Testament name for God and applied it to Jesus. This is marvelous. You know what the Old Testament name for God was? Savior. And he applied it to Jesus. When He was born, He was to be called Jesus, for He shall – what – save His people from their sins. He was born to be a Savior, Matthew 1:21.

Let me give you just a quick look at this. Turn to Isaiah for a moment, just for maybe a minute, and I’ll run by a few scriptures to kind of enrich you, and then we’ll draw to a conclusion quickly. In Isaiah 43:3, here Isaiah gives this title to God, “For I am the LORD your God, the holy one of Israel, your” – what – “Savior.” Verse 11, “I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no other savior besides Me.” Isaiah 45:15, “Truly, Thou art a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior!” Verse 21, “Declare and set forth your case; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God

and a Savior.” Isaiah 60, verse 16, the end of the verse, “Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer – your Savior and your Redeemer.” You see, when Peter says, back to 2 Peter, that we have received from God the power to believe an equally precious faith whether we are Jew or Gentile, and we are saved therefore by faith as the righteousness of God comes to us, it comes as the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is our God and Savior. He is really using titles for God to refer to Jesus Christ. The source of salvation, then, is God. He allots to us the faith to believe, and provides with it His own righteousness, the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Make no mistake, beloved, salvation is God’s gift in every sense – every sense. That is its source. Next week, its substance. Let’s pray.

Father, these truths are so rich, so thrilling to our hearts. How we thank You that we have been chosen by the foreknowledge of God the Father; thank You that when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and when we were blinded in our minds, so the light of the glorious gospel of Christ couldn’t shine to us, when we were Your enemies and hated You, You gave us faith to believe, and You gave equally to all of us the same precious saving faith. And then You granted to us the only thing that could make us acceptable to You, and that is the very righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is none other than our God and Savior. And His righteousness covers us – as Isaiah 61:10 says, we have been clothed with the robe of righteousness. We are covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. His righteousness for our sin, and we are forgiven. How we thank You, Lord, for being the source of salvation, You therefore deserve all the praise. We offer it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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