

The NT church was not ideal. There were problems within the church and dangers from without and within. There was persecution from the world and the dangers of false teachers within the church. Paul had warned the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:30), “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.” Peter wrote his first letter to encourage believers and give hope to those who were facing persecution. In his second letter he calls believers to fight against false teaching and false teachers from within the church. The presence of false teachers was a problem and is a problem that will increase. We need to be on guard and prepared.

Peter’s greeting gives advance notice of the letter’s topic(s).

1. *True teachers (as opposed to false teachers) will strive to be servants rather than being self-serving.*
To the greeting in his first letter Peter adds the word “servant”. False teachers are self-serving and may be marked by greed (2:3).
2. *True teachers (as opposed to false teachers) will consider themselves and others as equal recipients of God’s grace rather than distinguishing one group from another.*
As eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus the Apostles might be considered a special class of believers, but that is not the case. Every believer in Jesus Christ has received “a faith as precious as” the faith of the apostles. A recurring theme among false teaching is to elevate one group above another in their status before God. But such distinctions are not in accord with Scripture. Cf. Rom 11:18; Gal 6:15; 1 Cor 7:21f; Eph 6:5f.
3. *True teachers (as opposed to false teachers) will recognize the deity and lordship of Jesus Christ rather than lowering His place in either theory or practice.*
A particular grammatical rule in Greek equates “God” and “Savior” (v 1) as referring to the same person, i.e., Jesus is both our Savior and God. False teaching may openly or subtly challenge the deity and lordship of Christ. Some may claim to believe the correctly, but their lives will show that they do not submit to Jesus as God, their Lord.
4. *True teachers (as opposed to false teachers) encourage every believer to grow in the knowledge of God and Christ rather than setting themselves up as holders of special knowledge.*
Peter adds to the greeting of his first letter, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance”, the phrase “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Sometimes false teachers will claim to have special knowledge that only they can impart to others. Peter presumes that believers have a knowledge of God and of Jesus that will grant them abundantly grace and peace. Such knowledge grows from knowing Scripture and experiencing the God which Scripture reveals. The challenge to search the Scriptures and personally get to know God will mark true teachers from false.

Peter explains the foundation for spiritual growth which guards from false teaching.

1. *We are those who have received life.*
As Peter did in his sermon in Acts 3:2, he is reminding us here that it is God who is working in us. Jesus Christ by his power creates in us new life that is totally adequate to live godly now. Cf. Ephesians 1:3; Romans 8:32. What we have has come through a true knowledge of God, facts about Jesus (cf. John 5:39) and a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Continued growth in this relationship is a mark of true life. Having been called “by his own glory and goodness” probably means the glory and moral excellence which is seen in Jesus Christ. When we see Jesus, who he is and what he does for us, we are drawn by God to him. We need to present a true picture Jesus Christ to people and nothing less.
2. *We are those who possess great and precious promises.*
That these promises are called “precious” or, properly “as of great price” reminds us that they were made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ. The minimum to which these promises can refer is the promises related to our salvation: forgiveness of sin, freedom from the power of sin, daily cleansing from sin, eventual freedom from the very presence of sin; the promise of the Holy Spirit with His present work and all future blessings (Gal 3:14; 2 Cor 1:22).
3. *We are those who participate in the divine nature.*
This does not mean that we become gods, not even little gods. “Nature” is not the same as essence. We do receive God’s life in us and become the children of God (Romans 8:15-17) and hence new, i.e., divine, characteristics. In this sense we become participants in the characteristics of God. Cf. Romans 8:29. Fellowship with God that was broken at the fall is restored because we have been changed, being made conformable to God.
4. *We are those who have escaped the corruption that is in this world.*
In repentance one turns their back to the world and God rescues that person from the world and its corruption. Receiving God’s grace is not a freedom to sin, but a freedom from sinfulness. We should no longer have the desires (lust) of the world, but new desires from our changed nature. We now want to do what God wants.

These characteristics of the believer are a work of God, things which we can not cause to happen. The next verses in 2 Peter turn to our human responsibility. They are still a work of God, but we are responsible to take action. False teaching is a real danger, but our new life in Christ should make us want to avoid false teaching and lays the foundation for spiritual growth that enables us to detect and resist false teaching.