

## **FGBC: In Light of Last Days: Choose your Slave Master Carefully**

2 Peter 1:1-4

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We're starting a new series today looking at second Peter. Go ahead and open your Bibles to that. You will find it just after Hebrews and James.

So Peter is Jesus' number 1 guy. But he didn't get chosen for this because he was awesome. He got chosen because he was human – incredibly human. If Paul is the inspiration track of the New Testament – a brilliant man of power – then Peter is the encouragement track. He's the guy that when you read through the Bible you are supposed to think – wow, if Peter can pull this off then I can do it too.

But here's the thing with Peter, he grows. And this is good news for normal people. So the big message of Peter is you might be where you are today, but Jesus isn't going to leave you there. Maybe you're struggling with a sin addiction – maybe it's a substance, maybe it is the need for affirmation, maybe it is lust – and it just feels like it is never going to go away. Maybe you struggle with gossip or you spend all your time thinking about finances either because you have lots of them or not enough. Whatever your struggle the encouragement of Peter is that Jesus hasn't given up on you. You can look like Jesus if you give yourself to letting His Spirit work in you. So you **can** live the life of joy Jesus designed you to live. If it worked for Peter, it can work for you.

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Now Peter wasn't a big author like Paul, he only wrote two short letters, and this second one is special because it's Peter's farewell address. Peter knows he's going to die soon. And death wasn't quick and painless for him. Tradition tells us Peter got crucified, but when he found out this was going to happen he appealed to his captors saying "I'm not worthy to die like Jesus. So crucify me upside down." And they accommodated him.

So in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter he knows he's going to die and he writes this seeking to deal with the most important problems he sees the church struggling with. And these are issues that are just as relevant today as they were the day they were penned.

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Alright, let's dig into our text. If you've got your Bible open to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter that would be good. We are going to start in chapter 1 verse 1.

[Read 2 Peter 1:1a]

Stop there. Peter describes himself in two ways. So he calls himself an apostle which comes with some incredibly high authority. "Apostle" means commissioned messenger or ambassador. And so Peter is saying "I speak for Jesus. And Jesus says 'if you've got a problem with me, you can take it up with Him.'"

And that was true, Jesus did say “I’m building My church on Peter.”<sup>1</sup> But Peter isn’t flaunting his authority. He qualifies this with a second word – *dulos* in the Greek – which means slave of Jesus. So he is saying “Yes, I speak for Jesus, but that’s because I do exactly what He says. I’m not in a democratic relationship with Jesus. I don’t get a vote. Jesus says “jump” and I jump as high and as hard as I can.”

So Peter is an Apostle, and he’s a slave and he puts slave first just so we don’t get the idea that he’s bashing us on the head with his authority. By the end of Peter’s life he’s figured out that joy happens when he serves Jesus. And so he’s come to serve with this letter.

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Now, I think even the way Peter introduces himself is challenging. So ask yourself: What’s my relationship with Jesus like? Do I approach Him as a free agent questioning the way He tells me to live? Do I believe that I know what’s best for me? Am I content to be an ambassador as long as it’s on my terms? Or have I figured out, like Peter, that Jesus’ will leads to my joy? And so I come as an ambassador and a slave saying “I’ll do anything You say Jesus, I’m going to live for Your glory, because I believe You have my best interests in mind.” What is your relationship with Jesus like?

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One other note as we get into 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. In case you are the academic type who is going to study this at home you need to know there is a debate as to whether Peter wrote 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. And that’s because some of the vocabulary here is a lot closer the book of Jude than it is to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter.

And so what many theologians think happened is that Jesus’ little brother Jude wrote 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter either just after Peter died, or just before. But Peter and Jude had a very close relationship as they were both based in Jerusalem, and so Peter authorized Jude to write this, or at least gave him his approval. Either way Peter is involved. And so for this series I’m going to speak as though Peter is the author.

So Peter continues, look at the second part of verse 1.

[Read 2 Peter 1:1b]

Now here we get who this letter is addressed to. And you might notice that it’s a little different than most of the New Testament letters. So Paul always wrote to a specific church – like the church in Corinth or the church in Galatia. Or to a specific person – like Timothy. But Peter doesn’t do that.

Now he didn’t release this on social media, so a specific church received it first, but it is possible that Peter knows his letter is going to be read by a whole lot more than a single church, and so he addresses it more broadly.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 16:18

And I think that works because of the way Peter addresses his recipients. All we get is that they are people who've been saved by our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. And that's every church in the first century, and that's us.

But then he adds something powerful. He says "you all have received a faith as precious as ours."

Peter's like: "I'm Jesus' right-hand man, but your faith is just as precious as mine. So God isn't looking down and saying "Wow, you're an apostle or a worship leader or a pastor. I'm going to show up big in your life. Forget those normal people." No. The premise of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter is that everyone has just as much opportunity to encounter God and see Him work as anyone else.

And the reason for that is because we've all "received" the faith we have. That's the word he uses. And so it's pointless for anyone to boast about how awesome they are – even Peter – because everyone comes to faith the same way. We all come as sinners, and Jesus offers His grace in spite of that. Nobody here is awesome.

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Now intellectually I think that makes sense, but I've got a couple faith heroes in my life. Men and women I look up to, and maybe you do as well. And it's easy to think "well, I'm not like them. They are so far above me. No wonder God shows up in their lives." But Peter is saying that the spiritual giants don't have anything on us. If you want to meet God He will meet with you. You can be the most alive and godly person because your faith is just as precious as Peter's – isn't that amazing?

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In verse 2 Peter blesses his readers:

[Read 2 Peter 1:2]

This is what Peter prays for us. So grace and peace come from God as gifts. But that doesn't mean all of us are in the same place in our faith. We have the opportunity to grow in our knowledge of God and Jesus.

And Peter says this because one of his deepest convictions is that knowing God is how His grace and peace become powerful in our lives. So if you are hungry for more. If you want to enjoy God's peace then you need to know God. Don't know just about Him, get to know Him. The point here is this part is up to you.

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Now how does this work? Look at verse 3.

[Read 2 Peter 1:3-4]

Peter says you and me have just as much opportunity to encounter God as he did because God has given us everything we need to live a radically godly life. And this is true so much so that we get to take part in the divine nature. So what's that mean?

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Well, do you ever read about the miracles in the Old Testament and wish you could see one of them? Like the splitting of the Red Sea, or the plagues of Egypt, or massive hail crushing your enemies while you argue with them? Am I the only one who thinks stuff like that would add credibility to the whole Christianity thing?

I love the Old Testament stories, and probably my favorite are the ones Elijah is part of. So Elijah does all sorts of awesome stuff. He's the guy who tells a starving widow to give the last bit of food in her house to him instead of to her starving son. And she does it. And then her oil and flower never run out. Isn't that awesome?

Unfortunately a little later that lady's son gets sick and dies. And she gets mad at Elijah saying "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

Elijah doesn't think this is a fair accusation so he passes the lady's anger on to God "You brought tragedy upon this widow by killing her son." And God hears his cry and the boy comes back to life. Who thinks having Elijah show up in Canada might help church growth?

But probably my favorite Elijah story is the time this angry king named Ahaziah decided he wanted to get God to do some stuff for him so his plan was to capture Elijah and make him perform – great plan right? And since he was king, he sent an army to collect Elijah. And the Bible tells us what happened:

Then [Ahaziah] sent an army captain with fifty soldiers to arrest [Elijah]. They found him sitting on top of a hill. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king has commanded you to come down with us."

But Elijah replied to the captain, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and killed them all. (2 Kings 1:9-10)

Dude! Don't try to control God and make Him work for you – it's a bad idea! But the king didn't get the memo – it got scorched. So he sent another captain and another 50 soldiers and they got toasted too. And then he sent a third group but this captain was a little smarter so he opted not to deliver the king's message and instead hit the dirt in front of Elijah and begged for mercy.

Now when you read stories like that don't you just wish the power of God would show up in university lectures or in the world place? Wouldn't it build your faith if people turned into pillars of salt when they trash-talked Jesus in the Starbucks drive-through?

But here's the thing; the Bible says when we wish we were living in Old Testament times something is wrong with our understanding of the Holy Spirit, because everyone back then was longing for the days we are living in now.

Ezekiel is one of the big prophets who saw God move but wasn't content, he wanted what we can have. And God told him a time was coming when God was going to do something new. God said:

And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put My Spirit in you so that you will follow My decrees and be careful to obey My regulations. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

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In the Old Testament God's people met Him in the temple. God lived behind the curtain of the Holy of Holies. And only the high priest got to go in once a year. And people tied a rope to his ankle just in case they had to pull his corpse out. And the rest of the people just waited outside. That was the kind of power they were used to.

But God promised a time was coming when He would inhabit His people. And Israel was blown away. I mean how could He fit – they couldn't imagine. And Ezekiel writes about this and longs for it.

And in the very next chapter God showed Ezekiel a picture of what it would be like. Ezekiel had a vision. And in his vision God took him to a valley where a battle had taken place and it was full of bones. Thousands of dead people decomposing and their bones just lying around.

And God asked Ezekiel "can these bones live?" Now Ezekiel knew about Elijah, and what God was capable of. And so he responds "Only You know God." And then in his vision there was this rattling sound, the bones came together, flesh came onto them and an army woke up – not as zombies, but really alive people.

And here's what it meant. God was saying even though He lived in the temple and did amazing stuff for Israel. Israel was like a valley full of dry bones. But a time was coming when He was going to put His Spirit in people to make them really come to life.

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So our family ate one of those Save on rotisserie chickens this last week and I saved the bones.<sup>2</sup> If you were on staff at Ness Lake a couple years ago you may have seen this one. But let me just try again to demonstrate what this would be like ...

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Now imagine those chicken bones started rattling? Imagine if muscle and flesh formed on them right in front of your eyes, and then skin and feathers and this little thing just jumped up and started chickening around. Wouldn't you say "man this is going to be the best preaching series ever! 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter – Alright!

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<sup>2</sup> Illustration adapted from Francis Chan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPtIGfjKKgA> (Accessed June 7, 2019).

Here's the point. The Bible says this is the way people should be thinking about you. If you love Jesus the Holy Spirit is alive within you. We are living in the time when God inhabits His people and transforms our minds. So you aren't a pile of dead bones, you actually have God's Spirit in you.

Now some of you don't love Jesus. You know lots about Him, you're interested in Him, but living your life in a way that pleases Him isn't your greatest passion. So you aren't actually a Christian yet. You don't have the Holy Spirit in you. But this is available to you. If you want His grace and peace to fill you then you then you need to invite His Spirit to do this.

But if you've done this then people should freak out when they see you. They should say, "what happened to her?" We knew her. We know the way she used to be. But something totally freaky is going on because she's not the same.

That is the kind of life Peter is talking about when he says "we can participate in the divine nature."

What I'm saying is that Christian faith isn't about believing the right things. It's something powerful to be experienced. If you only believe in Jesus but aren't experiencing the joy of life with Him that's a tragedy and a real problem.

James tells us that the demonic realm is full of believers – the demons believe in Jesus. And they are totally devoid of His joy and their knowledge of Him is useless.

You see it is the Holy Spirit living inside us that saves. If His power isn't flowing through you, then you aren't saved. So how do you know?

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We know when we find ourselves growing in the godly life verse 3 speaks of. Godliness is a love for the things of God. So Christians aren't people who believe stuff about Jesus, they are people who are filled with His Spirit and love to please Him. Paul says:

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him. (Philippians 2:13)

God doesn't change what you do, He starts changing what you want to do.

So if you are asking "What can I get away with and still be a Christian" you're missing something. You should be saying "I want to please God with what I watch on TV. I want to please God with what I spend my money and time on. I want to please God with my sexuality. If you want this stuff it's evidence that you are growing in godliness and have Jesus' Spirit inside you.

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Peter finishes verse 4 saying: "Through God's promises you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Friends, the reality is our world is full of corruption. And I'm not just talking about government corruption. I'm talking about corruption at every level.

The Bible says Satan is the god of this world.<sup>3</sup> And he has blinded us by normalizing a life lived in opposition to Jesus. So advertising tells us "get everything you can because this life is all you get. So spend your money on yourself. And media says sexuality is no big deal so enjoy it however you want. Don't let God steal your fun. And our world tells us fill our schedules with as much sports and entertainment and work as possible so we don't have any time for God. These are the messages our world screams at us every second of the day. And the lie of the devil is that if you live this way you are going to be happy. But the devil's path always ends in bondage, it ends in slavery.

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Slavery... that's where Peter started. He's a slave of Jesus. So here's the thing. All humanity is destined to slavery. There is no such thing as a free person who does what they want. People who give themselves to sin find themselves immediately enslaved by it. This is why our world is full of drug addicts and workaholics, and people who can't stop looking at porn and people who are constantly looking for acceptance on social media. Our world is full of people who have been enslaved by sin. And the only alternative is to be enslaved to Christ. To live every aspect of your life in a way that pleases Him.

So here's the question I want to leave you with: Do you want to be a slave to someone who wants to destroy you, or someone who made you and wants the best for you?

Peter says choose your master carefully. Let Jesus' divine nature fill you and enable you to escape the corruption of this world.

Friends, this isn't easy, but Peter promises it's possible because God promises it's possible. God's great and precious promises enable us to participate in the divine nature.

So who are you going to empower to be the master in your life? Are you going to give into Satan's lie and make your time and money and sexuality all about you, or are you going to make Jesus God in your life and allow His Spirit to change your desires so that you actually want to live your life in a way that pleases Him? Choose the right master.

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4