

INSIGHTS ON 2 PETER: CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

A LETTER THAT RATTLES OUR CAGE

2 PETER 1:10, 12-13; 2:1-3; 3:1-6, 8-16



The Heart of the Matter

Sequels are usually inferior to the originals. This is true of movies—*Rocky* was a blockbuster, but *Rocky II*, *Rocky III* . . . *Rocky VI* (or however many there are) didn't do as well. It's also true of books. In the original, the first edition, the initial idea is fresh and new. What follows is simply a rehash with a twist. It's interesting, however, that the pattern of inferiority for sequels isn't true of books in the Bible. Second Samuel isn't a less exciting or less truthful book than 1 Samuel. And 2 Corinthians isn't less insightful or less pointed than 1 Corinthians. Nor is 2 Timothy less important to the church than 1 Timothy. Most of us may be more familiar with the first book than we are the second, but second volumes have a world of spiritual wealth and deserve as much attention as their older siblings. This is true of 2 Peter.



Discovering the Way

1. A Few Introductory Comments

Second Peter differs from 1 Peter in four significant ways.

2. Three Themes Woven Through the Letter

Like an arrow, which is made up of feathers, a shaft, and a point, 2 Peter is made up of three themes.

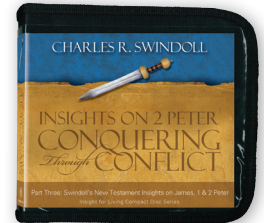


Starting Your Journey

Second Peter points us toward HOPE: Heed what you already know; Open your eyes and ears; Pursue a godly lifestyle; and Expect Christ's return.

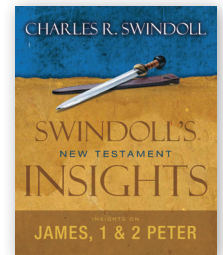


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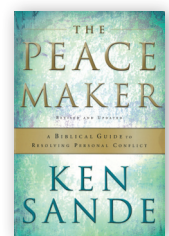
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SECOND PETER

	Introduction (1:1–2)	Exhortation to Spiritual Maturity Answers question: How can I grow in grace and knowledge? (1:2–3)	Denunciation of False Teachers Answers question: What should I expect from so-called prophets?	Anticipation of Christ's Return Answers question: What sort of people ought we to be? (3:11)	Conclusion (3:17–18)
		CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	
Warning		Be pure! (1:4)	Be aware! (2:1–3)	Be diligent! (3:1–14)	
Reminder		1:12–13	2:21–22	3:1–2	
Promise		“You will never stumble.” (1:10)	“The Lord knows how to rescue.” (2:9)	“We are looking for new heavens and a new earth.” (3:13)	
Perspective		Looking within	Looking back	Looking ahead	
Theme		Spiritual maturity as a remedy for false teaching and a right response in light of Christ's second coming			
Key Verses		3:17–18			
Christ in 2 Peter		Jesus is the Morning Star, who rescues the righteous from temptation and reserves the wicked for judgment (1:19; 2:9).			

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TO BE USEFUL AND FRUITFUL, HERE'S HOW

2 PETER 1:1–11



The Heart of the Matter

At least two things in life are desired by virtually everyone, especially Christians—to be useful and fruitful. Drifting through life in an aimless and unproductive manner is something all of us dread. Perhaps that's one reason why a lingering illness is so hard to bear. One feels useless and unfruitful. This feeling often strikes the heart of prisoners, particularly those who are new believers. And the elderly frequently sense their value and effectiveness fading as the years roll by. But no one in these situations, or situations like them, need fear being useless or fruitless if he or she is willing to define *usefulness* and *fruitfulness* according to Scripture—as 2 Peter shows us.



Discovering the Way

1. Introductory Remarks from Peter (2 Peter 1:1–3)

Peter opened his letter with important information about himself, the recipients, and God.

2. God's Promises—Our Participation (2 Peter 1:4–11)

Peter reminded his readers of what God gives and why, what we give God and how, and where it all leads and when.

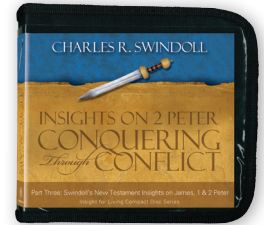


Starting Your Journey

Two important thoughts we all should remember. First, living a useful life on earth begins with salvation and requires diligence. Second, leaving a fruitful life at death results in motivation and guaranteed rewards.

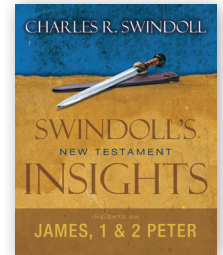


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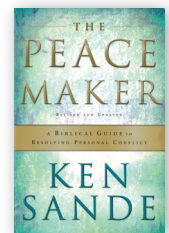
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BE SURE OF YOUR SOURCE

2 PETER 1:12–21



The Heart of the Matter

How important is a sure word from God! Without it, we struggle to find our way, we rely on shaky and sometimes spurious sources, and we never know if we are really on the right path. It is easy in such confusion to listen to human opinion and miss the clear leading of the Lord. In the closing section of 2 Peter 1, we are reminded of the only reliable source of truth: the Bible. We need this reminder, since so many these days claim to receive divine revelations from various sources—horoscopes, crystals, cards, dreams and visions, inner voices, signs and symbols, and feelings. No wonder so many have a hard time recognizing God's leading! Peter's counsel takes us back to the most dependable source of truth in existence today.



Discovering the Way

1. Popular Sources of “Divine Revelation”

Many people rely on natural and supposed supernatural sources to determine God's direction.

2. A Personal Reminder of “The Truth” (2 Peter 1:12–18)

Truth is God's revelation in Scripture, not cleverly devised stories from human minds.

3. A General Statement Regarding “Scripture” (2 Peter 1:19–21)

Peter reminded his readers that God's Word is sure, authoritative, and inspired.

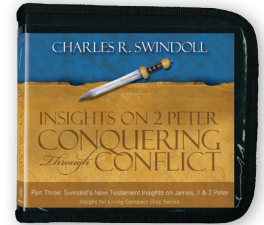


Starting Your Journey

When seeking a word from God, remember that God's Word is the most reliable source on earth. And when we make other sources equal to or more reliable than Scripture, we will fall into error.

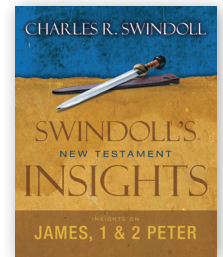


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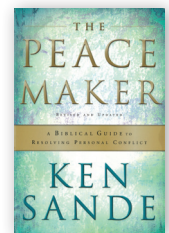
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INSIGHTS ON 2 PETER: CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

AN EXPOSÉ OF COUNTERFEIT COMMUNICATORS

2 CORINTHIANS 11:1–3, 13–15; 2 PETER 2:1–3



The Heart of the Matter

Almost as long as there has been the genuine, there has been the counterfeit. Whether art or money, authentic products or original publications, education or religion, phonies have been around. Such deception can lead to financial loss—as well as to destroyed lives. Any act of fraudulence is hurtful, but none is more hurtful than false prophets and phony teachers who present their lives behind religious masks. War stories abound of those who have fallen to these deceivers! To the surprise of many, the Bible reserves some of its severest words for those who act as though they are true but are indeed false . . . and the first three verses of 2 Peter 2 is a classic case in point.



Discovering the Way

1. The Original Counterfeit (2 Corinthians 11:1–3, 13–15)

Satan is the original deceiver, who targets the mind in order to cause doubts about Christ.

2. A Portrait of False Leaders (2 Peter 2:1–3)

False teachers are characterized by spreading heresy as truth, by denying the truth, by sensuality, and by greed.

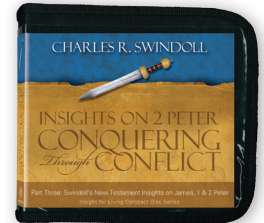


Starting Your Journey

How do you spot false teachers? Here are three simple tips. First, STOP: deliberately refuse to follow a teacher just because he or she seems okay. Second, LOOK: make careful observations into the life of the teacher and his or her followers. Third, LISTEN: scrutinize everything you hear through the filter of the Scripture.

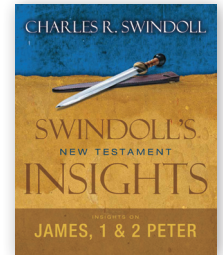


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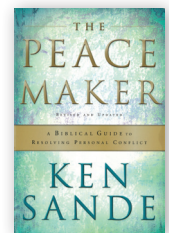
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INSIGHTS ON 2 PETER: CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

THE GOD OF WRATH AND RESCUE

JEREMIAH 12:15; LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23; ROMANS 2:1-3; HEBREWS 9:27; 2 PETER 2:4-11



The Heart of the Matter

In our study of Peter's second letter, we have arrived at an extremely serious section. This should not surprise us in light of our study on false teachers. It would be easy to think that those who are guilty of deceit and exploitation, greed, and destruction do all kinds of damage yet suffer few consequences. After all, how often are we aware of the pain and suffering of the unjust? More often, it seems, it is the godly who suffer while the ungodly virtually get away with murder! Not so! And passages of Scripture like 2 Peter 2:4-11 assure us that the punishment of evildoers will be both swift and sure. But our God is just. While His anger is not spared when it comes to judging the wicked, His compassion is not withheld regarding His own. As we shall see, the same God who deals severely with wrong is faithful to rescue those who belong to Him.



Discovering the Way

1. Two Sides of the Same God

Jeremiah provided a beautiful picture of God's compassion in Jeremiah 12:15 and Lamentations 3:21-23. But Paul and the writer to the Hebrews offered a dreadful picture of God's wrath in Romans 2:1-3 and Hebrews 9:27.

2. Judging the Wicked (2 Peter 2:4-6, 9-11)

God's righteous character demands that He punish all who persist in their rebellion to Him, whether angels or humanity.

3. Rescuing the Righteous (2 Peter 2:5, 7-9)

God's righteous character also demands that He save all who come to faith in Him, just as the biblical accounts of Noah and Lot illustrate.

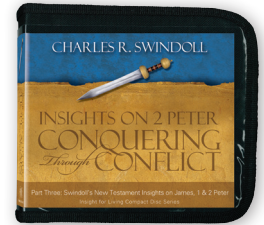


Starting Your Journey

As we think about the compassionate and judgmental character of God, we should always remember these two facts. First, God's compassion will result in the rescue of all believers. Second, God's judgment will result in the punishment of all unbelievers.

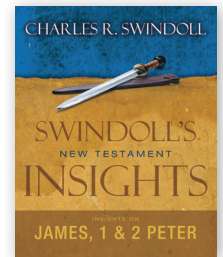


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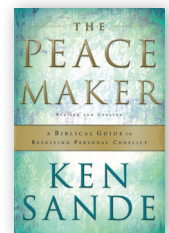
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DISOBEDIENCE GONE TO SEED

2 PETER 2:12–19



The Heart of the Matter

Some scenes in Scripture are lovely beyond description. Like a flower-filled field, these scenes are imbued with colors and fragrances, gentle rolling hills and fleecy clouds—images that bring us needed comfort. Such visual feasts leave us encouraged and full of hope. And then there are other pen portraits so harsh we find them repulsive. They stab us awake, they make us frown, they disturb our peace. The verses of 2 Peter 2:12–19 fall in the latter category. Among the most severe in the Bible, these words hold nothing back. They vividly represent the ugliness of unbelief . . . disobedience gone to seed. Going through this passage is as distasteful as walking through a garbage dump, where rotting food and rotten animal corpses fill the air with their vile pungency. But God commanded Peter to lead us through this wasteland and learn from what we see, hear, and smell.



Discovering the Way

1. God Tells the Truth about Everything

God never sugarcoats the truth. He always gives it straight and strong.

2. Peter Wrote the Truth about Apostates (2 Peter 2:12–19)

False teachers look impressive but are really depraved (2:12–14). False teachers forsake truth and go astray (2:15–17). False teachers promise freedom but are enslaved themselves (2:18–19).

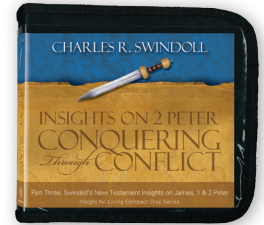


Starting Your Journey

We are to live the truth, no matter what. And the way we do that is to walk closely with God, to heed the counsel of His Word, and to respect the Holy Spirit as He prompts our hearts.

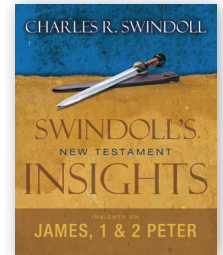


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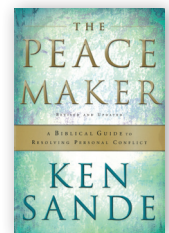
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INSIGHTS ON 2 PETER: CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

WHICH IS WORSE? WHAT IS BEST?

2 PETER 2:20–3:2



The Heart of the Matter

Peter pounded pretty hard on false teachers throughout the second chapter of 2 Peter—and deservedly so. As he came to the last three verses of that chapter, he concluded that it would have been better for them if they had never heard or known the truth about Christ than to have known and rejected the truth. Turning away from the false teachers, Peter then gave attention to true believers in 2 Peter 3:1–2, reminding them to keep their minds wholesome by sticking with the truth found in the Word of God. One set of individuals represents what is worse—to know and reject. Another set of individuals represents what is best—to know and accept. For us to be counted in the latter, we must stir up our minds by way of the Word.



Discovering the Way

1. A Brief Review: Which Is Worse? (2 Peter 2:20–22)

The context of these last three verses is the fallacy of false teachers. The consequence of their fallacy is they have knowledge without faith. And the question is which is better: head knowledge without heart knowledge or ignorance?

2. A Statement of Purpose: What Is Best? (2 Peter 3:1–2)

Peter wrote this letter to stir the already wholesome minds of his readers by reminding them that their responsibility is to remember the Word of God.

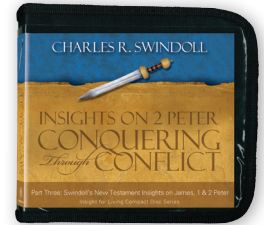


Starting Your Journey

So what? What is the practical response for us? Well, because knowledge brings responsibility, we should put into action what we know. Because responsibility means accountability, we should be able to endure examination. And because accountability is to be expected, we should return often to orthodox truth.

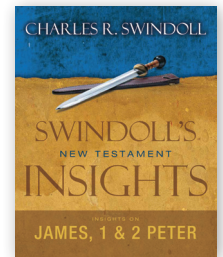


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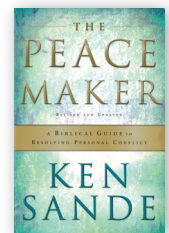
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SKEPTICS AND SINNERS, BEWARE!

2 PETER 3:1-7



The Heart of the Matter

For as long as there has been the truth, there have been those who scoff at it. With relentless and determined zeal, these cynical mockers have taken delight in discrediting God's messengers as well as denying God's message. Noah had his doubters who questioned the possibility of a destructive deluge. Moses had his critics who rebelled against his leadership. Nehemiah had Tobiah and Sanballat; Paul had Alexander the coppersmith; John had Diotrephes; and Jesus had scribes and Pharisees, Roman officials, and even a scoffing thief on a nearby cross. Down through the history of the church to this present hour, there have continued to be skeptics and sinners who have stood against the presentation of God's holy Word. In this segment of Peter's letter, we are provided with some needed reassurance that God is just . . . that in spite of the seeming success of the scoffers, there will be a day of reckoning.



Discovering the Way

1. A Brief Review of Contrary Forces

Mockers and scoffers have been around since the beginning of faith—in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and throughout church history.

2. Strong Reassurance for the Godly (2 Peter 3:1-2)

We can stand up to scoffers by remembering the Word of God and remembering who spoke them.

3. Sober Warnings to the Ungodly (2 Peter 3:3-7)

The words of Peter remind us of something to know about the present, of something to remember from the past, and of something to count on in the future.

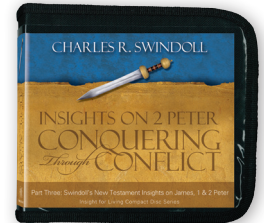


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Scoffers and mockers would do well to think seriously about this final reminder about God's judgment: its coming is sure. And when it comes, it will come swiftly. Are you ready? Have you come to faith in Christ?

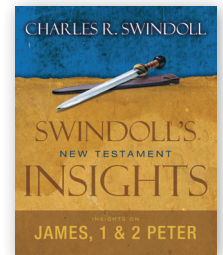


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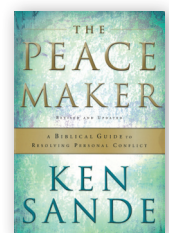
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THE DAY OF THE LORD

2 PETER 3:7-13



The Heart of the Matter

Prophetic events never fail to pique our imagination. Curious about the future, we are forever searching for what lies just beyond the horizon. But in all our searching, no source of information can compare to the Bible. When it comes to trustworthy, inspired truth we can count on, this Book not only stands out, it stands alone. These seven verses before us are an excellent case in point in which we are able to uncover several answers to questions inquiring minds have asked for centuries . . . and will continue to ask. Most of the Bible's answers revolve around the central topic of "the day of the Lord."



Discovering the Way

1. Several Facts about the Future, in General

Four important points will help us keep our study of future things in perspective.

2. Specific Truth Regarding the Earth, in Particular (2 Peter 3:7-10, 12)

The day of the Lord will come, according to God's mysterious timetable, when salvation's patient plan is fulfilled. Then, and only then, will earth's ultimate end come.

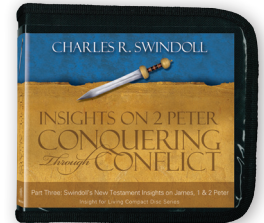


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Our marching orders from 2 Peter 3:11, 13 are clear: clean up, look up, and speak up. We are to live godly lives in the present—in light of the future.

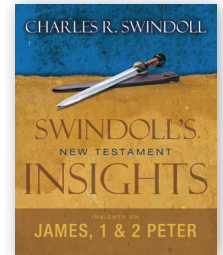


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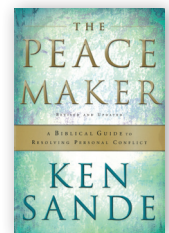
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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

INSIGHTS ON 2 PETER: CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

HOW TO LIVE IN TROUBLED TIMES

2 PETER 3:14–18



The Heart of the Matter

In contrast to the popular opinion of uninformed individuals, Christianity is not a religion of easy-livin', soft music, downhill slides, and tranquil times. Whoever thinks the Bible is irrelevant and laid back shows gross ignorance of what Scripture really teaches. One is hard-pressed to find godly people mentioned in the Bible who were out of touch with and indifferent to the world around them. Almost without exception, the people of God in the sacred texts were highly motivated, courageous, tough-minded soldiers of the cross, slugging it out in the trenches of real-world situations. Because tranquil times represent the exception rather than the rule, God's Word focuses most on troubled times . . . telling us how to face them, not escape them. Peter's final words provide us with a case in point. Right down to the last, he pulls no punches as he puts the truth before us in unmistakable terms. Take it or leave it—believe the truth or not; those are the only options. If it's a lazy snooze in the sunshine you're looking for, better stay away from God's Book. *Easy ain't there!*



Discovering the Way

1. A Few Words about Where We've Been

Peter's first letter is about how the hurting can have hope. Peter's second letter is a warning about our troubled times.

2. Strong Words for Handling Today (2 Peter 3:14–18)

Peter's letter reminds us to whom he was writing and concludes with four commands.

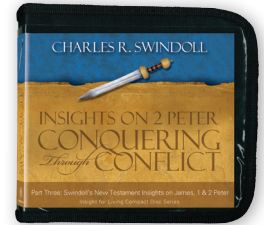


Starting Your Journey

Even during troubled times, we must continue to grow spiritually. So, how's your growth these days? Are you working to maintain balance? Do you see measurable changes when you compare today with yesterday?

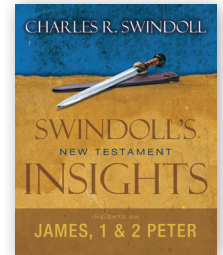


Tools for Digging Deeper



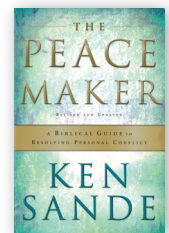
Insights on 2 Peter: Conquering Through Conflict

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Swindoll's New Testament Insights: Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter

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The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict by Ken Sande softcover book

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INSIGHT FOR LIVING

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