

27.4

Godliness and Knowledge in 2 Peter

Second Peter calls on readers to grow in godliness and proposes that they might do this through knowledge of God (1:3). Specifically, the letter stresses knowledge of the future and knowledge of the past.

Knowing the future: Unlike the false teachers, who take no account of God's impending judgment (3:3–4), the readers know the truth about Christ's certain and imminent return (3:8–10). For them, the question becomes "What sort of persons should we be?" (cf. 3:11). The obvious answer is: persons who lead "lives of holiness and godliness," persons who strive to be found "at peace, without spot or blemish" when that moment arrives (3:11, 14).

Remembering the past: Unlike the false teachers, who ignore the record of God's past judgments (2:4–10; 3:5–6), the readers must not be "short-sighted and blind" with regard to the past (1:9). Further, they should be appreciative of what God has done for them, remembering the "cleansing of past sins" (1:9) if they wish to confirm their call and election by God and move forward in righteousness (1:10).

Taken together, these points emphasize both the prospect for growth (1:4) and the danger of backsliding (2:20–21).