



Comments by Dr. David A. DeWitt

2 PETER CHAPTER 1

Second Peter is a sort of last will and testament, written by Peter, most likely from prison in Rome, where he was awaiting execution. His reason for writing is to build up the true believers because false teachers had infiltrated the Church.

- Chapter 1 is about building up true believers.
- Chapter 2 is about the false teachers who have infiltrated into the Church
- Chapter 3 is about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world.



The Apostle Peter by Sir Anthony van Dyck from www.artnet.com

There is some discussion about whether Peter actually wrote the letter. Ryrie gives a good summary of the arguments about the authorship of 2 Peter:

“Many have suggested that someone other than Peter wrote this letter after A.D. 80 because of

- (1) differences in style,
- (2) its supposed dependence on Jude, and
- (3) the mention of Paul’s letters having been collected (3:16).”

However,

- Using a different scribe or no scribe would also have resulted in stylistic changes.
- There is no reason why Peter should not have borrowed from Jude, though it is more likely that Jude was written later than 2 Peter.
- 3:16 does not necessarily refer to all of Paul's letters but only those written up to that time.
- Furthermore, similarities between 1 and 2 Peter point to the same author.
- Its acceptance in the canon demands apostolic authority behind it.

Assuming Petrine authorship, the letter was written just before his martyrdom in A.D. 67 and most likely from Rome" ("Ryrie Study Bible," p. 1984, outline mine).

Chapter one has three paragraphs:

A. Introduction – 1:1-2

B. Be Sure of the Knowledge of Your Calling – 1:3-11

C. Be Sure of the Knowledge of the Scripture – 1:12-21

A. Introduction – 1:1-2

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant 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:

The letter begins with a textual problem concerning the spelling of Peter's original name "Simon," which he does not use in 1 Peter. Some manuscripts have the common Greek spelling Σιμων (Simon), whereas others have the direct transliteration of the Hebrew Συμεων (Sumeon). The best textual evidence supports the second more unusual Hebrew spelling. This spelling is used only here and in Acts 15:14. This second form is most likely the original. It was probably later simplified to the very common Greek form by some scribe. The only significance is that the second (and textually most likely) usage would tend to confirm that Peter was indeed the author of the letter. An impostor would most likely use the common Greek form.

Πέτρος (Petros) *Peter* means *rock*, the name given to him by Christ.

Peter then described himself with two words:

- Δοῦλος, the common word for a *voluntary permanent slave or bond-servant*
- ἀπόστολος, an *apostle*, meaning a *sent one*

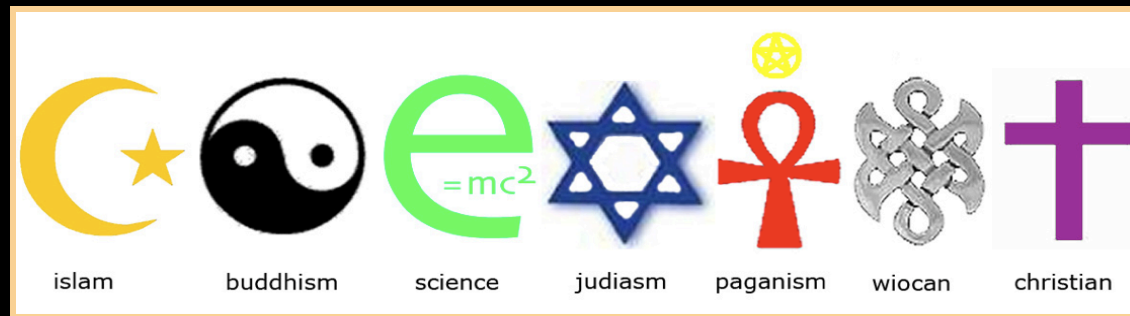
Next, Peter addresses his audience as the whole true Church *To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours*. Many assume the letter was originally sent to the same people as 1 Peter, those: *who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*. That is possible, but this sounds more like a general good-bye letter with final instructions to the whole Church.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord

The significance in this greeting is Peter's emphasis on *knowledge*. Knowledge is the subject of the first chapter. Here he calls it *the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*. In the chapter, he will develop that in the area of their own faith and the revelation of the Scriptures.

THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

Peter wrote the first epistle to describe the normal Christian life as one of suffering persecution in a hostile world. This epistle is written to prepare believers for dealing with false teachers in the Church. In the introduction, he prepares the way by telling the Church his wish for them is that they increase *in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*.



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The secular world wants you to believe all religions are essentially the same, so they should all peacefully “coexist.” But it’s not true. No other religion, no philosophy, or other moral code anywhere is based on people knowing God. Muslims submit, Jews keep traditions, Buddhists rid themselves of desires, but no other belief is based upon knowing God. Knowing God is the most dangerous, difficult, and perfect morality. Laws are replaced, culture changes, traditions vary, but God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

B. Be Sure of the Knowledge of Your Calling – 1:3-11

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

It seems a bit odd to begin a new section in the middle of a sentence as indicated by the NASV English text. Actually, it seems that Peter is beginning a new sentence, but it is hard to translate. The point, however, is clear. The power of God has provided us with all we need to live a godly life. And that power of God is the knowledge of God. This paragraph (verses 3-11) is basically about God the Father. The point is, the eternal life of the believer in *the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* is all about the knowledge of God and the call of God.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Peter goes on to say that it is *by them* (God's own glory and excellence) that God the Father gave us *magnificent promises*. Promises like:

- John 1:12 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*
- John 5:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*
- Romans 8:1 *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
- 1 Peter 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.*

Next, we are told that by these promises we *may become partakers of the divine nature*. The Eastern Orthodox Church teaches a theology whereby believers take on the Spirit of God. They believe that, as we mature, we take on more of the divinity which was in the apostles, and the divine spirit may even come to us through the icons of the apostle when blessed by the church. This is not what Peter is saying here. Peter is saying that, through the knowledge of God, we take on the moral nature of God, when we escape *the corruption that is in the world by lust*.

2 Peter 1:5-7 can be outlined as follows:

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence. In your faith supply

- 1. Moral excellence,*
- 2. And in your moral excellence, knowledge,*
- 3. And in your knowledge, self-control,*
- 4. And in your self-control, perseverance,*
- 5. And in your perseverance, godliness,*
- 6. And in your godliness, brotherly kindness,*
- 7. And in your brotherly kindness, love.*

After exhorting his readers to all *σπουδὴν*, *haste, speed, zeal, or diligence*, Peter tells them to *supply* things to their faith. The word *ἐπιχορηγήσατε* (*epi-choregesate*) here translated *supply*, more basically means to *add, or give*. We get the English word “choreography” from this word. Literally, it’s *upon (epi) – choreography (choregestate)*. Choreography is *the art or practice ... of designing the sequence of steps in a dance ... figure skating, ballet, or other staged dance*. (MacBook Pro dictionary).

So Peter is telling us believers to add to our faith a *choreography* of other virtues. Namely:

1. ἀρετήν, *excellence or virtue*
2. γνῶσιν, *knowledge or understanding*
3. ἐγκράτειαν, *self-control or mastery*
4. ὑπομονήν, *endurance, patience, perseverance, or steadfastness.*
5. εὐσέβειαν, *godliness or piety (a combination word literally good-worship)*
6. φιλαδελφίαν, *brotherly love, or friendship*
7. ἀγάπην, *love*

2 Peter 1:8-9 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

Following the positive *choreography* of virtues in verses 5-7, Peter next lists four consequences of not adding those things. Those who ignore that development of their faith become:

1. ἀργοὺς, *useless or idle*
2. ἀκάρπους, *unfruitful*
3. τυφλός, *blind or μυωπάζων, short-sighted or near sighted*
4. λήθην, *having forgotten, his purification from his former sins.*

2 Peter 1:10-11 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

There are three theological issues involved in the first phrase of this sentence: making certain, His calling, and His choosing. The question is: “How can I *make certain* what God is doing?” Gangel writes:

1. *βεβαίαν* [make certain] is rendered “secure” (Hebrews 6:19), “guaranteed” (Romans 4:16), “firm” (2 Corinthians 1:7), “courage” (Hebrews 3:6), “confidence” (Hebrews 3:14), and “in force” (Hebrews 9:17).
2. “Calling” refers to God’s efficacious work in salvation (cf. Romans 1:7; 8:30; 1 Corinthians 1:9),
3. “election” is God’s work of choosing some sinners (by His grace, not their merits) to be saved (Romans 8:33; 11:5; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:1). Election, of course, precedes calling. [“Bible Knowledge Commentary” note on 2 Peter 1, numbering mine.]

Gangel is wrong about # 2. The call of God is not *God’s efficacious work in salvation*. We are not saved by our calling. We are saved because of our calling but salvation comes through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Chronologically it's:

Election – God's choice of those who would be saved in eternity past.

Calling – God's conviction of the believer concerning his sin and need for salvation.

Faith – our decision to receive what God has elected and called us to do.

Assurance – our βεβαιάν, *making certain, being sure of, having confidence in* our salvation.

So the only certainty I have of my election is my obedience. Walt Henrichsen put it this way:

What's the only
provision for salvation?

Jesus!

What's the only
means of salvation?:

Faith!

What's the only
assurance of
salvation?

Obedience!

There is no way to get around the fact that Peter connects all of these together. Our election, calling, faith, and assurance are links in one unbroken chain, which abundantly supplies *the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. This is not to say we are saved by our works (such as the seven works listed in verses 5-7). Neither are we saved by our calling. We are saved by a chain of events which begins with our election and ends with our obedience. If there is no obedience, then there is no evidence that there has ever been any election, calling, or faith.

THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

The list in verses 5-7 is very significant because it tells us to add things to our faith. Adding these things does not get us saved or keep us saved, but they do assure us that we are saved. Peter definitely connects these additions to our salvation in verses 10 and 11 when he says they are the way to *make certain about His calling and choosing you*.

Today's liberals (such as the emergent community) say God loves everybody ("LOVE WINS"), and, therefore, create a climate where unrepentant sinners are comfortable. This has led some serious-minded Bible scholars to respond saying:

1. Unrepentant sinners lose their salvation.
2. Unrepentant sinners were never saved because they never received Christ as Lord.
3. Unrepentant sinners should not have assurance of salvation.

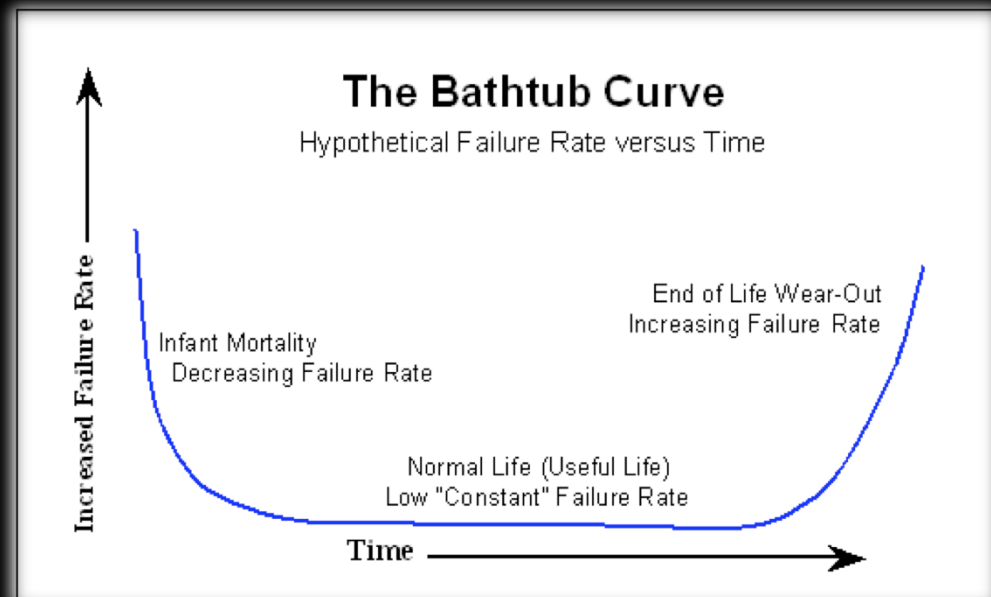
1 isn't possible, because it violates the sovereignty of God. Those who are saved are chosen from eternity past (Ephesians 1:3-11; Romans 8:28ff). If they can actually have salvation and actually lose it, then God is not sovereign. # 2 changes salvation from grace to works (Ephesians 2:8-9). It defines salvation as what I will do in the future, rather than just receiving what Christ did in the past (John 1:12).

3 is true, but it requires some discussion.

- For sure, we should not give assurance of salvation to unrepentant sinners (1 John 2:4). If I am violating the commandments of God and justifying it rather than repenting, then I should not have assurance of my salvation. For example, if I am making a case outside the Bible for, say, homosexuality, remarriage, cohabitation, abortion, gossip, tax evasion, etc., then I cannot know I am saved. This is not about how well I'm doing, but if I am trying to change God's commands rather than confessing my sins (1 John 1:8-10).
- If we say that all intentional sin causes one to lose assurance of salvation, then no one can have assurance because all known sin is intentional. And if no one can have assurance of salvation, then the *rest* described in Hebrews 3 and 4 is not possible (see also Romans 8:14-16). Even though I do not want to sin, I not only know I will, but when I do, I will intend to do it. My known sin is not an accident. So it is non-repentance, not intention, which disqualifies someone from assurance.
- But what if I premeditate sin, thinking, "I know this is wrong, but I will just ask for forgiveness afterwards," thinking, "Forgiveness is easier to get than permission"? This presuming upon the grace of God seems to be a form of non-repentance. If I were repentant of it, I wouldn't be planning it.

It is true that, just before we sin, we plan to do it. At the moment I decide to sin, I allow my sin nature to take over, and I intend to disobey God. That's Romans 7:19 *For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.* But it seems that the longer we plan it, the more we are presuming upon the grace of God, and the less likely it is that our repentance is sincere. There seems to be a difference between falling into gossip or lust suddenly, and planning to ruin someone's reputation or commit adultery. But, of course, only God knows our hearts and motives.

One other area of application should be considered. Peter wrote this letter as he was nearing the end of his life. As Peter got older, living for Christ got harder. As we get older, the spiritual life, like all of life, gets harder. Consider this graph (from www.weibull.com). As we get older, the failure rate in all areas of our life tends to get greater. So it is important to add these things to our faith as early as possible, to fight the tendency of greater failure later in life. Generally, our weakest areas will become weaker as we get older. Both David and Solomon had their greatest failures after they were 50 years old.



C. Be Sure of Your Knowledge of the Scripture - 1:12-21

2 Peter 1:12-15 *Therefore, I will 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. 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, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.*

Peter begins this chapter with a sort of last will and testament. It is similar to Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 4:6-8. As he faces his death, Peter's focus is on two things. When he is gone he wants to reach out from beyond the grave and:

1. ὑπομιμνήσκειν, *remind* them of the basic theological and moral concepts taught by Christ and the apostles, and
2. διεγείρειν, *stir* them *up* so they will not be complacent or casual about their faith.

As we shall see in the next chapter, one reason for this is to be able to defend themselves against false teaching. What the false teachers do is change the teaching of Christ and the apostles just a little, then little by little they move away from the foundation of the Gospel. So Peter reminds them of what they already know, because soon they will be told something different.

Also, Peter knows that they will not take on these false teachers if they are casual about their faith. So he wants to, not just remind them, but *stir them up* so they are excited, uneasy, and restless—like a stirred-up pot, not a stagnant pond.

Although it is not Peter's main thrust, we should not leave this passage without noticing Peter's view of death. Traditionally, he was crucified in Rome (upside down because he did not consider himself worthy to be crucified as Jesus was). Peter describes death as:

- *laying aside of my earthly dwelling, and*
- *the time of my departure*

So, Peter sees himself, his true actual self, as separate from his body, and his death as the time when he will depart from that body. The same is said about the death of Rachel in Genesis 35:18, *It came about as her soul was departing (for she died) ...*

2 Peter 1:16 *For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*



Peter's crucifixion window in Poitiers Cathedral, dating from the late 12th century from www.sacred-destinations.com

This is the uniqueness of Christianity. It is not based on some clever story (such as the angel Maroni revealing special tablets to Joseph Smith in a cave in Elmira, New York, or an angel Gabriel reciting the Quran to Mohammed during his meditations in Mecca). The miraculous events surrounding the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are public events, witnessed by many people. Peter says *we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*

2 Peter 1:17-18 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Notice that here, and elsewhere in his epistles, Peter confirms that the gospel accounts are true. What the gospel writers say happened to Peter, Peter also says happened – just the way the gospel writers described it.

Here Peter refers to that time on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus was transformed into His glorious (actual) state, and the curtain is drawn back allowing them to get a glimpse of Moses and Elijah and hear the voice of God. It is interesting that Peter says the utterance was *made from heaven*. That would tend to indicate that heaven is not just another place but another dimension. Peter, James, and John didn't actually have to go anywhere to get there.

Also, notice that this confirms the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Although this passage alone does not prove the deity of Christ, it confirms it. It also confirms the whole demeanor of Christ as He walked the earth – seeing himself as the Messiah, the Son of God the Father.



Mount of Transfiguration picture from www.oneyearbibeblog.com

2 Peter 1:19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

The first word in the Greek text καὶ, is not so, it's the word usually translated *and*, sometimes with the equating sense of *that is*. Other than that, the NASV text is straightforward. Clearly, Peter is saying that the events they witnessed, such as the transfiguration of Christ, confirmed the Scripture. That Scripture is called a *lamp shining in a dark place*, the dark place being this world.

But the difficult phrase is the last one. *Until the day dawns and the morning star arises* certainly sounds like the Second Coming of Christ. But what has that got to do with the morning star arising *in your hearts*? My suggestion is the phrase *the day dawns* refers to the Second Coming, but *the morning star* refers to the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the Millennial Kingdom (as described in Jeremiah 31:31-34). So, until the Millennial Kingdom, we will need to depend on the Scripture (*the prophetic word*) to receive our knowledge of God. And what Peter witnessed made that prophetic word *more sure*.

2 Peter 1:20-21 *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*



Inspiration picture from dsc.discovery.com

The words *προφητεία γραφῆς*, *prophecy of Scripture*, refer to any revelation from God, not just future prophecy. The appropriate word for future prophecy would be *αποκάλυψις* (*apocalypsis*, as in Revelation 1:1) rather than *προφητεία* (*propheteia*, here and in Revelation 22:18). So, Peter is talking about prophecy which is *γραφῆς*, written revelation from God.

Many meanings have been given to the statement *no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation*. Ryrie lists three of the most common ones. I shall state them in Ryrie's words (from the "Ryrie Study Bible," p. 1986), with my comment next to each.

- 1) "Prophecies must be interpreted in the light of other Scriptures." This is true when other Scriptures apply, but that is not always the case. *One's own* seems to refer to the reader, not the text.
- 2) "Prophecies are often capable of several fulfillments." But this is about interpretation, not fulfillment.
- 3) "Prophecies must be interpreted only with God's help." It's true that God illuminates His Scripture to believers, but this is not about what God does in the believer, this is about the nature of revelation itself.

I suggest a more accurate understanding would be:

- 4) No correct interpretation of a prophecy of Scripture is to be determined by what I think it means. The only correct meaning is the **author's intended meaning**.

Next, Peter tells us how the Bible was inspired, *men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

'Inspiration is God's superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man.'

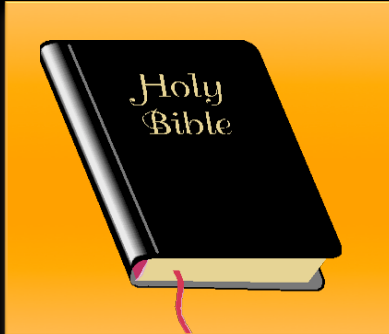
("Ryrie Study Bible," p. 2055)

THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

Revelation comes from God to man. It is God disclosing something which man would not otherwise know. There are two forms of revelation:

1. **General Revelation**, which is of two forms:
 - a) **Creation** revealed in the natural world (Romans 1).
 - b) **Our conscience**, that is, our inner moral notions, our sense of right and wrong, justice, and thoughts of purpose and destiny.





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2. **Special Revelation**, which is also in two forms:

- a) The person of **Jesus Christ**, because of His deity (John 1:1-3)
- b) The **Bible**, because it is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

Inspiration is when revelation is written down by men:



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- Without error
- Using their own personality and composition style
- Understanding the revelation they wrote down and what God intended, but not necessarily everything God intended.

Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit on the believer so that we understand God's revelation.

Interpretation is using reason to determine the author's intended meaning. This is unique in studying the Scripture only in that it has a dual authorship – God and the human author. Notice:

- Thoughts like: “To me, this means ...” and “Here is how this passage speaks to me ...” have no place in interpretation. There can only be one correct interpretation of any passage, and that is whatever the author intended it to mean.
- Knowing the author's purpose is not necessary for determining his meaning. The purpose is often not given, and if it is not given, it should not be considered in the interpretation.
- If the author's intended meaning cannot be determined, then the passage cannot be applied.

Application is putting a passage to use. The author's intended meaning can be applied today by mentally sliding up a chair to the table for the author. It's as if we ask him: “What should we do today?” Then we look in his written text to determine the answer.

