

Security: a Glimpse into Your Future

Got Hope? Messages from 1 Peter

February 20 & 21, 2010

Next Step on membership at 9:10.

Intro:

Have you ever experienced buyer's remorse? After you buy something expensive, you second guess your choice and start to wonder if it's really worth it. Maybe you've felt this way after buying a car. One way to handle your doubts is to read the owners manual. Reviewing the list of features gives you assurance that you made a good decision.

People who have decided to follow Christ can slip into a similar syndrome when times get tough. The doubts can be like buyer's remorse. The Bible teaches that there's a cost to discipleship and life confirms that fact. It's a costly commitment. All the troubles we experience can lead us to wonder if it is worth it. When these doubts surface, I open the owners manual. In the Bible we learn the benefits of following Christ. Reviewing these renews our confidence.

Today we are starting a study of 1 Peter. This letter was addressed to people in need of comfort. They needed confirmation of their choice to follow Christ. They needed a reason to keep on. In the opening section, Peter helps believers grasp what is in store for Christians in the future. The resulting security can help us handle troubles in life.

Let me explain how I'll be approaching this series. I plan on printing a section of 1 Peter on my outline sheet each week. I want you to follow along and jot down observations. (Looking at your own Bible is even better.) We'll study the text carefully, noticing what is there for us. It will be like taking a walk in the forest, seeing the beauty surrounding you, enjoying the details - a flower here, a soaring hawk there. When you come to certain points that take your breath away - a mountain top, a view of a river valley - these points particularly deserve your attention. We'll stop here and there to take it all in.

So, let's start our walk...

1 Peter starts like letters used to start, with the identification of the author and of the recipients.

1 Peter, an apostle one sent with authority of **Jesus Christ**, He was originally called Simon but Jesus renamed him Peter = the Rock. He was a Galilean fisherman who was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew, who was originally a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1). Peter is mentioned first each time the disciples are listed and was clearly recognized as their leader. As you read through the gospels, you notice that Peter was part of the inner circle and functioned as the spokesman. In Acts, we see Peter again in the lead. He preached the first message as the Christian church was formed. Peter's strength was his strength, but strength was also his weakness. Because he tended to place confidence in his own ability, he made some flamboyant mistakes. It took him time to learn to depend on Christ. *Maybe you can relate to that?*

To God's elect, strangers in the world,... *Aliens, foreigners:* only temporarily here. Implies we belong somewhere else. We do. God's chosen people are citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20) are not permanent residents on earth. **scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,** (modern day Turkey) **2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:** The a customary greeting: **Grace and peace be yours in abundance.** (*More on being chosen: Eph 1:2,3; Rom 8:29,30.*)

There are lots of things to notice here, but check out the idea that *we are chosen for obedience*. God has not brought us into his family only for our personal aggrandizement. The point is that we honor him, living according to his will.

We're selected and set apart with a purpose. We're here temporarily as strangers in this world for a reason. We're on a mission, representing God as Christ's ambassadors.

That is pretty wild! It will appear to others that we are at least a little different. *At least, it should!* This is an idea worth considering for a moment. Let's stop and look at it. I want you to pause and appreciate this first reminder point: **oRemember who is strange.**

Christians are called *strangers*. When you're blown away with how crazy things seem around you, remember that *you're the one* who is weird - at least from the perspective of this world. And that is where we live for now. We're *in the world*, but not *of it* (Jn 17:16). We don't go with the flow. We don't float along with the ever-changing culture current. But anything tied to an immovable rock will stick out. If we stand fast, we will be subject to mockery, harassment, and rejection. The Bible teaches that persecution will get worse. We will be seen as different because we are: *You've met your maker already. You live for someone in the sky! You're headed to heaven where you'll connect with God and others for eternity.* That seems strange! We have been *captured up into another dimension* from the flat world. We're like color in a landscape of gray. Earth-dwellers will think of us as spacey! 1 P 4:4 - They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. *Have you experienced that yet?* You will. From the perspective of this world, *we* are the weirdoes. *Elect exiles.* Old song: *This world is not my home.* That realization helps us to manage life down here. **R.**

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Why? *In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

Great mercy is needed due to our great guilt (Rom 3:23).

into a living hope: Hope is dead if Christ is dead. But he conquered death and it is *through the resurrection* that we are given new life. Now he describes this new life:

4. and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you... What is in store is *secure*, it is *guarded, shielded*. You have a reservation! You're in. You're going to *arrive safely* someday. It is *certain*. This future is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away. It won't expire and go bad. Contrast this to what moth and rust will destroy (Matt 6:19-21). *What do you long for? Will it last?*

What is in store for us won't dissipate or wither. Toys break. Fashions fade. But our future with God is secure!

T - In verse 5 he continues to describe us and our future: **5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.** How is this ours? By *faith*.

Shielded: We are protected. Nothing can really get us. Phil 4:7 - God's peace *guards* our hearts and minds.

T - All of these verses about what God has in store for us makes me want to stop and state that we need to...

oRemember where it all leads. This is the 2nd point I want to emphasize today. What we go through eventually points up. It all culminates in *life forever with God*. This section reads like a list of benefits. It helps us remember what makes our salvation so valuable when we're tempted to doubt our decision. It paints a picture of the future and gives reassurance. **R 3-5.** Following Christ really is worth it.

6 In this (what's to come - our secure destiny) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. He's saying: *We take joy in our future, but the present can be pretty tough.* Why are the tests of life so hard? *Picture yourself in prep school.* Even though the tests are hard, you're comforted to remember: *This isn't the end in itself. I'm being prepared for what is next.*

for a little while: Life here doesn't last that long. An eternal perspective will help us to manage present pain.

2 Cor 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Rom 8:18 our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

you may have had to suffer: This doesn't sound optional! Trials and tests are inevitable and inescapable.

all kinds of trials: manifold, variegated, multicolored: blue days, gray moods. Are your troubles multicolored? Are you *green* with envy? Is there a *black* cloud? Are you *red-hot* with anger? Our difficulties come in many shades.

T - So, why do we have to experience trials, tests and troubles in life? What good comes from this?

7 These have come *so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.* He uses refining imagery. Our faith is more valuable than gold. But, like gold, it is refined by fire. The heat burns off impurities. In the same way, when things heat up, the fire reveals what is valuable. I've heard that the metal worker knows the process is complete when he can see the reflection of his face in the molten metal. That's the point of what you're going through right now. You're to reflect God. If he has you in the furnace, rest assured that he is watching the clock and controlling the thermostat. He won't leave us in there too long or burn us. He's not abandoning us; he's purifying us.

T - I'll read a couple more verses, and then we'll stop to take in another meaningful point. **8** *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.* Gives hope.

T - Here's what I want to emphasize:

oRemember pain has a purpose. Look again at the words *so that* in verse 7. The purpose is that our faith would be tested and shown to be real and pure. The darkest hour is just before the dawn. Think of the guys on the road to **Emmaus**. (*Explain*) **Luke 24:21 - we had hoped that he was the one...** They *had hoped*, but they stopped hoping. It all looked hopeless. They didn't have hope because they didn't understand that *the cross had to come before the kingdom*. It is the same with us. The cross you bear is not without meaning. There is hope on the other side of this trial you're facing! **R.**

T - There's just one more vantage point I want you to take in today. It is really just an encouragement to study God's Word together. Let's read **10-12** to lead us there...

10 *Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.* This is saying that the writers of the Old Testament didn't always understand what they were writing. They wanted to know more about what God was going to do and tried to figure out when and how the Messiah would suffer and be glorified. 2 Peter 1:21 reminds us that prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. They didn't always get it, but we can!

12 *It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.* God revealed to the prophets that what they were writing would not be realized in their generation. But now that time has come. Even angels have wanted to learn what we now can grasp. Here's the point to ponder, let's...

oRemember how privileged we are.

If angels longed to learn more about Jesus as God's means of salvation, how is it that we are so ambivalent? Commit yourself to learn all you can! What a privilege! Don't miss a lesson in this series. Bring a friend. Get into it. Join me in getting to know God better by learning about Jesus from the pen of a man who served with him, side by side.

Before I pray, I want to ask you if you are secure for the future. Do you know you have *an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you?* You can know that for sure. 1 John 4:13 - I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. *Prayer team available.*

For extra study:

Introductory Matters on 1 Peter

Why should we study 1 Peter?

First Peter was written to Christians who were facing various forms of persecution. The original recipients were people whose changed lives made them aliens and strangers in the midst of an ungodly society. Peter exhorted these believers to steadfast endurance and right living. His warm pastoral style and practical instructions make this epistle a unique source of encouragement for all believers who live in conflict with their culture. As we study, we can put ourselves in the sandals of the first century readers and receive the same blessings they did.

Why is background material important?

Information concerning such topics as authorship, date and place of writing, destination, occasion of writing, literary form and textual matters provide us with help understanding what the letter

was originally meant to communicate. To comprehend a letter that was written on the other side of the world, in the most complex language known to man, nearly 2,000 years ago, requires some special effort. All the information that we can acquire about the original setting is valuable to us in our interpretation of the meaning of this epistle.

Another reason to study introductory matters is to establish the authenticity of the writing. At the time that 1 Peter was circulating through the areas of Asia Minor to which it is addressed, there was a multitude of pseudoepigraphical letters floating around. Early scholars needed to discern amongst the mess of writing purporting to emanate from the apostles. The authority of the epistles needed to be established prior to their acceptance into the canon. Determining the apostolicity of a document requires research.

Authorship, Authenticity and Authority

When studying any ancient writings, the original assumption of genuineness and accuracy is not properly discarded unless significant research reveals compelling evidence to the contrary. 1 Peter claims to have been written by "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). The book must be studied for internal consistency and the writings of contemporary and later authors are scanned for direct references to the author or quotation from the work. In the case of 1 Peter, there is abundant evidence of its influence on early Christian writers and for its wide reception in the early church as authentic. Petrine authorship was universally recognized until recent years.

The reasons for doubting that Peter wrote this epistle revolve around a few technicalities and amount to no more than an attempt to undermine the authority of Scripture. One of the arguments involves an identification of the persecution mentioned in the epistle as occurring significantly later than the time of Peter's death. The justification of this thesis is merely speculative. Another equally absurd argument cites the many similarities that 1 Peter has with other books of the New

Testament and presupposes that someone other than Peter must have penned this letter under the influence of Paul. The similarities, of course, are easily accounted for by the fact that the Holy Spirit had a hand in the production of the whole Bible and some of the same thoughts are likely to come up when different books are superintended by the same Spirit. Another major stumbling block that needs to be resolved before some will accept 1 Peter as genuinely written by Simon Peter the apostle, is the fact that Peter was explicitly described in Acts 4:13 as “unlearned and ignorant.” Some might wonder how a Galilean fisherman, who normally spoke Aramaic, could sufficiently master the Greek language to produce a work with such superb literary style and sophisticated use of vocabulary. Some have guessed that the accusation in Acts 4:13 indicates Peter was illiterate, but the context of the passage makes it clear that the Jewish leaders were flabbergasted by Peter’s ability to preach as he did without formal rabbinic education in the Scriptures. It is well within the realm of possibility that Peter, after 30 years of preaching and teaching in a trilingual world, had acquired tremendous facility with the Greek language. His exposure to the language certainly started before his missionary work among Greek-speaking people, because Greek was the cosmopolitan language and anyone with much to do with public affairs or commerce needed to be fluent.

Another interesting aspect to consider when discussing the high quality of the Greek grammar used in 1 Peter, is the fact that 1 Peter 5:12 says that the writing was done “through” (or “by”) Silvanus, also known as Silas, companion to Paul. We know that Silas was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:36, 37) and could have had a Greek education. Silas may have only been the messenger who delivered the letter, or he may have been the secretary, or “amanuensis” to whom it was dictated. However much influence he may have had in the actual composition of the letter, 1 Peter still originates from Peter. It was his personal message; he guaranteed it with his seal. Apostolic authenticity is compatible with some freedom of expression on the part of the intermediary.

The similarities between the content of the sermons attributed to Peter in the book of Acts, with statements in 1 Peter, also lend support to the argument for genuine Petrine authorship. Compare 1 Peter 1:20 with Acts 2:23, 1 Peter 4:5 with Acts 10:42 and 1 Peter 2:7-8 with Acts 4:10-11. Peter also commands elders to “be shepherds” in 1 Peter 5:2. The only other place in the New Testament where this word is used as a command is in John 21:16, when Jesus gave Peter the same charge.

Now that we accept that Peter wrote this book, it is of interest to note that he was regarded as the leader and spokesman for the early disciples. His name always appears first in the lists of the twelve in the Synoptics. His original name in Hebrew was Simeon. Simon is the Greek equivalent. Cephas is a Greek translation of the Aramaic for “rock” and Peter is the English equivalent of the Greek word Petros, also meaning rock.

Peter was a fisherman from Bethsaida who also had a home in Capernaum. His “north country” accent gave him away as a Galilean (Mark 14:70). His brother Andrew was one of John the Baptist’s disciples. (John 1:35-42).

Peter was one of our Lord’s three closest companions. Jesus appeared especially to him (1 Corinthians 15:5) and gave him a special commission (John 21:15-19). He is the main character in the first 10 chapters of Acts.

Date and Place of Writing

Peter apparently wrote this letter just before, or shortly after, the beginning of Nero’s persecution of the church in A.D. 64. 1 Peter 2:13, 14 and 17 seem to indicate that the persecution had not yet reached the level of the government. Even though it may not yet have been illegal to be a Christian at the time of Peter’s writing, the persecution was still severe in social, economic and religious circles. The hostile society would slander, ridicule, discriminate against, and even inflict physical abuse on those whose lives evidenced their commitment to our Lord. This sort of treatment

is currently going on in some places in the world and we may face this type of persecution soon.

Peter cryptically referred to his location as “Babylon” (5:13). Rather than the literal city of Babylon, Peter was almost certainly referring to Rome, but concealing his true location in order to evade the Roman officials who finally did capture him and put him to death only three years after this letter was written. Rome was also called Babylon by John in the book of Revelation (14:8;17:5).

Destination

1 Peter is addressed to Christians scattered throughout five Roman provinces of the peninsula of Asia Minor which is now the country of Turkey. These churches were made of both Jews and Gentiles, as indicated by the many Old Testament passages that would have great significance to the Jews and passages such as 1:14 and 2:10, which would have pertinence to Gentiles.

More meat:

Vs 1 strangers:

Heb 11:8-16 - they have a different city on their mind. ¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Paul took the faith to Rome where he defended his faith in a trial Phil 1:12-24. He was released but then rearrested and executed under Emperor Nero who blamed Christians for the fire in Rome (64). Peter died shortly after that.

Vs 2 - *sprinkling* signifies the application of Christ’s sacrifice.

What is the difference between a sojourner and a vagabond? Wandering with a purpose or without one!

Strangers: Persecution is taking place right now in a lot of countries. And it is prevalent here in academia and Hollywood.

Vs 7 - The faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.

Vs 12 - More on angels coming to grasp the gospel: Eph 3:10