

Sunday, October 4, 2020 pm

STUDIES FROM PETER'S EPISTLES (1)

Introduction

Tonight, we want to begin a study of the books of 1 & 2 Peter. For the past many years we have been engaged in a number of studies where we go through books of the New Testament. Previously, we concluded the book of Philippians. In this lesson, I want to begin a study of the General epistles attributed to Peter. This will be an ongoing monthly study, with possible breaks for special studies or other occasions. For now, we will devote the first Sunday night of each month to this study.

I chose these books for my next expository series because they address some very timely themes. 1 Peter is a book about suffering and submission. 2 Peter is about perseverance unto the end, even in the face of false teachers.

Let's get started with this study tonight.

I. Background Info (1:1-2)

- a. ***Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ*** – there is little debate that this first letter was written by Peter the apostle of Jesus. He is referred to early on, even by external sources among the patristic writers who appealed to this letter.

Internally, Peter identifies himself as the author. He also makes mention of himself in 1 Peter 5:1 as a fellow elder (recall that we know Peter was married as he had a mother-in-law that Jesus healed – Matthew 8:14-17

Of all the original apostles, Peter is perhaps the most well-known. He was an early disciple of Jesus and very outspoken. While with Jesus, he was the one to speak up that Jesus was the Son of God in Matthew 16:16. He was the one who firmly denied that he would forsake Jesus, but he did 3 times. He is the one who after this was restored by Jesus as recorded in John 21, but a little humbler.

It is his sermon that is recorded in Acts 2 on the day the church began. He was sent to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to Christ (Acts 10). He later defended Gentiles in the Lord's church refusing to demand that they follow the LOM (Acts 15:7-11). But he also struggled from time to time. We read of that in Galatians 2:11ff where Paul had to challenge him for acting hypocritically.

Many more facts about Peter could be said, but these are sufficient for the time. 2 Peter is believed to be his farewell address (Much like 2 Timothy is to Paul).

Letters from Peter ought to be very relatable because we see in Peter great flaws (denial of Jesus, hypocrisy, impetuosity, etc.) that are documented. So most of us can relate to him better than Paul or John (though I am not saying they are perfect either).

- b. ***Written to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia*** – these different regions in the NE quadrant above the Mediterranean Sea.

Like written to congregations that were mixed – both Jews and Gentiles. There are references within the letter to point to this.

The origin of the churches in that region is unknown. They could have been converts from Jerusalem who took the gospel there (Acts 2:9-11), or possibly converts of Paul while in Asia (Ephesus) who took the gospel east and into that region. Possibly, Paul could have visited some of those places at some point, but we are not told. We do know he wrote the letter to the Galatians, one of the regions mentioned.

The significance of this, is we have faithful saints standing fast.

- c. ***This is a letter believed to have been written in the early to mid-60s and toward the end of Peter's life.*** We know the 2nd letter bears Peter's farewell remarks. And many believe the first letter did not precede it by too much.

1 Peter 5:13 makes reference to Babylon and some believe that this is where this was written from. But is this a reference to the real Babylon, or some believe Rome (which was often compared to Babylon – Revelation 18:10, 21, 17:5, etc.)? It is because of this (as well as statements by early church writers) that some believe Peter went to Rome. There is nothing definitive.

Personally, I don't know which of these Peter is dealing with OR is this a figurative reference to being in spiritual captivity (Babylon is where Judah was carried away to). The New Testament was written during times of great hostility toward Christians and that really is a prominent theme in this letter. I cannot help but wonder if this is a general letter written with that in mind.

Arguing against this is the fact that Peter's letter is not figurative language, but I can still see the possibility of it being a spiritual application because of its wide distribution.

- d. **The purpose of this letter** – The primary message of this letter is one of enduring even in times of suffering. There are a few themes to consider as we go through this book.
- i. *Suffering* – the Greek word (πάσχω, paschō) for suffering is found 12 times in this letter, beginning with 1 Peter 2:19-20 – where Peter appeals to servants to be submissive even if they are suffering wrongfully. Vs. 20 notes
This is followed by a reference to Jesus suffering for us (1 Peter 2:21-24)
This same idea of suffering for the right reasons is repeated in 2 Peter 3:14, 17-18.
1 Peter 4:1 again appeals to the suffering of Jesus as motivation to endure suffering
1 Peter 4:15-16 notes that we should use suffering because of bad behaviors and decisions as cause to cry persecutions. But if you suffer as a Christian...
1 Peter 5:10 gives us a promise – after we have suffering for a little while God will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.
As Christians we are going to suffer and face trials and tribulations (2 Timothy 3:12). And in trying times such as these, IF you are suffering, let me encourage you to read 1 Peter. It is a book that is short, but filled with hope and encouragement to endure.
 - ii. *Submission* – 1 Peter 2:13 submit to ordinances, 2:18 – servants be submissive; 3:1, 5 – Wives be submissive, 5:5 – the younger (and all) submit to elders and be submissive to one another
Peter even speaks of how Jesus has gone into heaven and all angels, authorities and powers are subject to Him.
 - iii. *A living hope* - in our next lesson we will examine Peter's opening greeting which is designed to instill hope and endurance (1 Peter 1:3-9), something we need as we endure suffering.
 - iv. *Holy living* – we need to live lives set apart from the world. That means holiness. This letter tends toward that theme as well (and it certainly relates to dealing with suffering)
1 Peter 1:15-16 - as He who called you is holy, you also be holy
1 Peter 2:5-10 where Peter talks about our spiritual priesthood – which is clearly related to holiness.
1 Peter 3:15 calls for us to sanctify ourselves and be ready to defend our hope.
 - v. *Practical admonitions* – the book is also filled with plenty of practical encouragements.
1 Petr 1:13-14 – gird up the loins of your minds and be sober.
1 Peter 1:15-16 – 1 Peter 1:22-23 – love one another fervently
1 Peter 2:1-2 – Put away attitudes of hatred and deceit and desire God's pure word so that you will grow
1 Peter 2:11- abstain from fleshly lusts
1 Peter 2:12 – be a good example so as to remove evil accusations from the ungodly.
1 Peter 2:13-17 – obey your government
1 Peter 3:8-9 – be of one mind and care for each other (you need each other)
1 Peter 4:9 – be hospitable without complaining
1 Peter 4:10-11 – use whatever gifts you have

1 Peter 5:6-7 – Humble yourselves and cast your cares on God
1 Peter 5:8-9 - Be sober and vigilant watching for the devil and resist him
AND many other practical admonitions that we will address as we go through this letter.

II. 1 Peter 1:1-2 – the introduction

- a. As already noted, Peter identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ.
- b. **To the pilgrims** – this is one of many words that remind us of how we are out of place in this world. That actually is one of the points Peter seeks to remind his readers of – 1 Peter 4:3-5 notes how we should not be surprised if the worldly no longer accept us (even old friends) because we have changed.
In 1 Peter 4:12-13 – do not think it strange concerning the fiery trials you are enduring.
1 Peter 2:11 – Peter begged them “as sojourners and pilgrims”
This same word is found in Hebrews 11:13, where we read that many of the patriarchs died in faith not having received the promises and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims.
This also accords with Ephesians 2:19 which reminds us that we are citizens of God’s kingdom, as does Philippians 3:20
- c. **The Dispersion** - The idea of the dispersion is that they were scattered (dispersed), which most likely means as a result of persecutions.
Remember how in Acts 8:4 after persecutions began in Jerusalem they were scattered and went everywhere preaching the word. The dispersion (lit – diaspora)
The word is only found 3 times in the NT – John 7:35 where Jews questioned teachings of Jesus about His going to a place where they could not find Him. They asked themselves, “Does He intend to go the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?” This was a reference to Jews who had been scattered throughout the world centuries earlier.
James 1:1 – he also writes “to the twelve tribes scattered abroad.” Many believe that was one of the earlier letters and was addressed primarily to Jewish brethren after they had been scattered due to persecutions in Rome. But this could have reference to spiritual Israel – (those belonging to Christ)
More than likely the meaning of OUR text is that it is addressed to Gentiles and Jews alike, ALL believers. There are hints to this throughout the book of 1 Peter.
- d. Peter proceeds to mention a specific region consisting of several provinces as we noted earlier in the introduction.
- e. **Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God** the Father– or chosen by God. The point Peter is making here – he is writing to the saved. Those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus and are now Christians.
The idea of election is a doctrine that has been misinterpreted to teach that God randomly selected certain individuals to be saved and all others will be lost. Calvinistic election teaches that man has no choice in this.
The Bible teaches otherwise – John 3:16 tells us that whoever believes in Him might be saved.
2 Corinthians 5:14-15 tells us that Jesus died for all – that is, His death is available to everyone.
1 Timothy 2:3-4 tells us that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth.
Finally, in Acts 10:34 as Peter is sent to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, He begins teaching by saying, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.”
The idea of the foreknowledge of God points to the fact that God knows all things, including who WILL obey, but also WHAT HIS PLAN would be so that all man CAN obey.
- f. **Sanctification in the spirit** – there will be substantial reference to holiness as we go through this book and will be address that when we get there. Here we are simply reminded that through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are set apart to God. His word convict us (Hebrews 4:12, Romans 1:16). 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 says, *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the*

- Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is through the gospel (and possibly by other means) that the Holy Spirit does His work. But it is an invitation available to all.
- g. ***For obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*** – this is what it is about. We are called upon to obey the gospel – Acts 22:16, 2:38, etc. It is in the act of baptism that we come into contact with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4) which is where His blood was shed.
 - h. ***Grace and peace*** – Peter begins with common greetings – to both Gentiles and Jews alike. The words are obviously significant to Christians as we desperately need both the grace of God and peace with Him and one another.
2 Peter 1:2 adds to this, “*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.*” It is THOUGHT His word that we find this grace and peace.

Peter is writing to those who were Christians scattered abroad. This letter is written to them to encourage them to stay that way, even in the face of hostilities. As I read this letter, I see just how equally relevant it is for us today. We are living in ungodly and evil times. But we must endure and we cannot quit. Peter will help us to see that and give us some understanding as to HOW we should live and WHY. I commend this lesson AND letter to you.