

Sunday, January 11th, 2009
Living Hope EFC

Art Smith

1 & 2 Peter: Living for Christ amidst suffering & false teachers.

1 Peter:

Major Theme: Peter writes to encourage Christians who are undergoing various trials, temptations & sufferings (1:6) to continue to live for God and not give into their natural instincts.

ILLUS: All kinds of trials threaten shipwreck! (1 Cor.9:24-27)

- Our own flesh, prosperity, leisure time –
- False knowledge/ teaching –
- Unjust suffering –
- Legalism & libertarianism –
- False prophets –

1:1-12 NOTE: It is the sureness of God's salvation of the believer that gives us confidence of His present care and our future inheritance, amidst current painful trials, and gives us motivation to live as "a chosen people belonging to God," 2:9.

The assurance of the Christian's salvation

Vs.1 – **Elect:** Chosen, by God's foreknowledge. Eph.1:4

- As citizens of heaven Christians are not permanent residents on earth. Their lifestyle is different.

Vs.2 – God's election originates in the eternal will & purpose of God – **Acts2:23**, the only other use of **προγνωσις**.

- **Foreknowledge carries an element of determinism.** That which God knows, He knows because it exists, is a fact.
- What God foreknows comes to pass in time. -Is.46:10; 48:3
- The verb is used in: **1 Pet.1:20; Rom.8:29.**
- In ways we cannot fully fathom, we acknowledge the fact that God is sovereign over every atom of universe.

Vs.2 - **Sanctifying work of the HS:** John 6:45 "Everyone who listens to the Father & learns from Him comes to me."

- John 16:8 The Spirit convicts of sin; 1 Cor.2:9-14 without the Spirit we can't accept God's truth.

Vs.2 – **Sprinkling by His Blood:** Heb.9:12,14-15; 10:14.

Vs.3 – Given us **new birth**/ beginning: Titus 3:5; John 3:3; 1:11-13.

- A **living hope:** Rom.5:2 "We rejoice in the hope of glory..."

Vs.4 – An **eternal inheritance** in Heaven! Imperishable, unfading.

- Kept in heaven! (Who can touch it?) In God's custody!

Vs.5 – **Shielded** (protected, guarded) by God's power: Jn.10:28

- God's power keeps us secure. Faith brings us into His life.

POINT: It is imperative for the Christian to understand His new citizenship in God's Heaven, secured by God's power, in order to endure the onslaught of warfare that he faces in this world.

God's grace not only gives hope for the future, but for today.

God's sure salvation gives confidence in current trials: Vs.6-7

1- **A little while**: Though trials seem to go on forever, they are a grain of sand – compared to eternity.

2- **Tested faith** = glory & honor. They provide opportunity for eternal glory and praise – for us – before God.

- Faith in Christ is “approved worthy” by testing. There is really no other way to prove our faith. Deut.8:2. Heb.11:17
- Peter refers to suffering at least 15 times in this letter.
- **GOLD**: the purer it is, the more valuable. Purity comes by fire. It is perishable yet requires this extreme process.
- FAITH: yields eternal value/ rewards. Trials purify it.
- FIRE/TRIALS are not meant to hurt...but to perfect.
- “All that is not of faith is sin,” loss.

What trials were the Christians facing? Nero's persecution.

- Nero had a passion for building. Much of Rome burned.
- Suspicion surrounded him. He needed a scapegoat.

Christians were already slandered:

- “Eating someone's body, drinking his blood?”
- Holding secret meetings, love feasts,?
- They separated families – by proselytizing new members
- They spoke of coming *day of judgment*, coming fire!
- It is Nero who likely had Paul killed, and Peter.

Sulpicius Severus (363 – c. 425) was a Christian known for his chronicle of sacred history. -

Barclay, 149-50

In the meantime, the number of Christians being now very large, it happened that Rome was destroyed by fire, while Nero was stationed at Antium. But the opinion of all cast the odium of causing the fire upon the emperor, and he was believed in this way to have sought for the glory of building a new city. And, in fact, Nero could not, by any means he tried, escape from the charge that the fire had been caused by his orders. He therefore, turned the accusations against the Christians and the most cruel tortures were accordingly inflicted upon the innocent. Even new kinds of death were invented so that, being covered in the skins of wild beasts, they perished by being devoured by dogs, while many were crucified, or slain by fire, and not a few were set apart for this purpose, that when the day came of a close, they should be consumed to serve for light during the night. In this way, cruelty first began to be manifested against the Christians. Afterwards, too, their religion was prohibited by laws which were enacted; and the edicts openly set forth it was proclaimed unlawful to be a Christian.”

RESULT: Every Christian became an outlaw. And, although persecution was not constantly carried out, any time an official wanted to he could enforce the law and imprison a Christian.

Peter writes to encourage Christians that their faith was most precious to God. He wrote to build up their faith in the midst of troubles. They would receive salvation.

In 1 & 2 Peter he addresses several dangers to the Christians faith:

- 1- Trials & potential death. > Your life is imperishable: 1:23-25.
- 2- Rebellion against government. > Submit to authority.
 - Follow Christ's example: 2:13-25.
- 3- Unchristian patterns in a mixed marriage. > Submit: 3:1-7.
- 4- Fear! > 3:13-17.
- 5- Hard heartedness of unforgiveness. 4:7-11.
- 6- Dominating elders in the church: 5:1-4.
- 7- Satan's evil: 5:8-9.

In His Second Letter he continues the same concerns: 1:12-15.

- 8- DOUBT – about the truth of Christianity, Christ's reality 1:16-18.
- 9- False prophets with their false teachings: 2:1-3.
- 10- Scoffers denouncing promise of Christ's return! 3:3-7, 10-13

In light of these dangers to persevering in our faith...

In his Second Letter, Peter builds upon what he said in the first.

First Peter: Stand strong because of your sure salvation (1:1-12).

Second Peter: Stand strong by growing in you ability to participate in God's divine strength (1:3-11).

Peter gives us a foolproof way to live the Christian life without stumbling, and to receive a rich welcome into heaven, 1:3-11.

Challenge:

“There is only one thing,” said a village blacksmith, “that I fear. That is to be thrown on the scrap heap.”

When I am tempering a piece of steel, I first heat it, hammer it, and then suddenly plunge it into the bucket of cold water. I very soon find whether it will take temper or go to pieces in the process. When I discover, after one or two tests, that it is not going to allow itself to be tempered, I throw it on the scrap heap and sell it for a cent a pound when the junkman comes around.

So I find the Lord tests me, too, by fire and water and heavy blows of His heavy hammer, and if I am unwilling to stand the test, or am not going to prove a fit subject for His tempering process, I am afraid He may throw me on the scrap heap.”

When the fire is hottest, hold still, for there will be a blessed “afterward;” and with Job we may say, “When he has tried me I will come forth as gold.”

Streams in the Desert: **Village Blacksmith**

1 Cor.9: “Lest after preaching to others...”