

Sunday Morning Message

September 27, 2020

1 Peter 1: 1 - 5 - Saved and Secure in the Midst of Suffering

Series – 1st and 2nd Peter - *Experiencing God's Grace In the Midst of Suffering*

Text – 1 Peter 1:1 - 5

Congregational Reading – 1 Peter 1:1 - 5

Introduction

The Background of Peter

- His name was Simon (Hebrew - Simeon). The Lord changed his name to Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek), which means “stone”. (John 1:42) Note – there is no other Peter in the New Testament.
- His father was Jonas. [John 21:15,16, 17 (or Jona – Matthew 16:17 – Barjona means the son of Jona)]
- He had at least one brother named Andrew. (John 1:44; Matthew 4:18; 10:2; Luke 6:14)
- He was a fisherman (Matthew 4:18; Luke 5:10) – Unlike Paul who was a Pharisee and studied under the great teacher Gamaliel, he did not have formal training in the Scriptures.
- He was a married man (Mark 1:30; 1 Corinthians 9:5), and he was from Capernaum in Galilee. (Luke 4:31; 38)
- He was part of the Lord’s inner circle, which also included John and James. (Matthew 26:36 – 37 - the Garden of Gethsemane; Matthew 17:1 – the Mount of Transfiguration)
- He was naturally impulsive. (Matthew 14:28; 17:4; John 21:7)
- He was tenderhearted and affectionate. (Matthew 26:75; John 13:9; 21:15 – 17)
- He was gifted with spiritual insight. (John 6:68)
- He was sometimes slow to see deep truths. (Matthew 15:15 – 16)
- He was bold about his faith at times (Matthew 16:16; John 6:69); but he also denied the Lord. (Mark 14:66 – 72)
- He was self-sacrificing, but at times he was also self-seeking. (Matthew 19:27; John 21:21)
- He became immovable in his conviction. (Acts 4:19, 20; 5:28,29,40,42)

- He was used of the Lord to lead Cornelius, a Gentile, to Christ, which opened the door for the gospel being preached specifically to Gentiles, and inclusion of Gentiles in the churches. (Acts 10)
- He boldly stood up to the religious leaders in the temple, but he later feared his friends from Jerusalem. (Galatians 2:11 – 12)
- He was for a time the leader of the Apostles and the church at Jerusalem, but later went into missions work, and tradition tells us that his wife accompanied him.
- He travelled to northern Asia Minor, an area that Paul wanted to go to, but was forbidden by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 16:6 – 7)
- He was put to death by Nero in A.D. 67. He asked to be crucified upside down. His wife was crucified also.
- The Lord prophesied that Peter would fail, but also declared that Peter would strengthen his brethren. These two epistles were used greatly to strengthen Peter's "brethren" throughout the centuries.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:31-32)

The Background to 1 Peter

First Peter was probably written in 63 A.D. just as the outbreak of tremendous persecution was beginning at the hands of Nero. Second Peter was written shortly afterward perhaps a year or so before Peter's martyrdom in 67 A.D. 1 Peter 5:13 tells us that the letter was written from "Babylon," which some say could be a code name for Rome. However, it is very possible that Babylon was the actual place of writing. There were many Jews that lived there, descendants of those that were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar over six centuries prior to the time of Peter's writing. The letter was written "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," ("scattered" - διασπορά - *diaspora* - 1 Peter 1:1 – [see map](#))

The letter definitely has a Jewish flavor with many Old Testament references to both passages and people; but it also specifically applies to Gentile believers as well. (1 Peter 1:14; 2:9 – 10; 4:3 - 4) Peter was the Apostle to the Jews, but by the time of this writing Christianity was made up of mostly Gentiles who would have been encouraged by this letter as much as were the Jews.

The theme of 1 Peter regards God's grace through times of suffering. This letter was written at a time when Jewish Christians were experiencing intense persecution from the religious leadership within Judaism; and all believers, both Jew and Gentile alike were suffering at the hands of the Roman Empire. 1st Peter was written shortly before or at the very beginning of Nero's reign as the Caesar, or ruler, of the Roman Empire.

Christians suffered intensely during Nero's reign. He was an insane madman who had a passionate hatred for Christians. He became obsessed with torturing and killing Christians. He even burned down a portion of the city and blamed it on the Christians.

John Phillips gives a very vivid description of Nero:

He was just three years old when his father died. It was little loss to the boy. for his father had been a killer, a bully, and a cheat. His mother took over the family trade and continued the boy's education. She murdered his stepfather with a dish of poisoned mushrooms. He was reared in squalor and proved a notable son to his parents. While still young, he committed his first murder, killing a teenage boy who stood in his way and watching him die with callous indifference. He married at fifteen but soon had his wife killed. He married again and slew his second wife too. In order to marry a third time, he murdered the husband of the woman he wanted. His mother annoyed him; so he arranged her murder, first by guile, but when that was unsuccessful, without pretense. He was an ugly man with a bull neck, beetle brows, a flat nose, and a tough mouth. He had a pot belly, spindly legs, bad skin, and offensive odor. At the age of thirty-one he was sentenced to death by flogging. He fled to a dingy basement and, in the house of a slave, cut his own throat. He gave the infant church its first taste of things to come. His name was Nero. He was the first of the persecuting Caesars of Rome.¹

Nero was the emperor responsible for the martyrdom of Paul and Peter somewhere around 67 A.D. along with many others. Nero was a psychopathic murderer who had a blood-lust for killing Christians. Some of his infamous cruelties include the following:

- He dressed them in skins of beasts so that they would be torn by dogs or wild animals.

¹ Phillips, J. (2009). *Exploring Revelation: An Expository Commentary* (Re 2:8–11). Kregel; WORDsearch Corp.

- He crucified them in a variety of fashions.
- He burned and smoked them after having cut them and scourged them.
- He nailed them to a stake and wrapped them in mantles and burned them, using them to light the streets of the city and even his private gardens.

It is believed that Nero actually burnt down much of the city of Rome and blamed it on the Christians.

In this epistle, Peter reminds first century believers in the fact that though the persecution they were enduring was severe, it was only temporary; but their salvation is eternal. Throughout this letter, Peter encourages these persecuted people to remain faithful to the Lord and to each other within the household of faith as they endure the fiery trials of persecution. Though this letter was very practical to the believers of the first century, it is also very apropos for today's Christian living in a world that is becoming increasingly antagonistic toward Christianity.

Ryrie states this about the persecution faced by these believers: "Persecution took the forms of slander, riots, local police action, and social ostracism."² We can certainly see these same actions within our society today, and eventually they will be directed almost exclusively to followers of Christ.

Think also about how this letter will be treasured by those believers who will read it while suffering the trials of the Tribulation Period.

The theme of 1st and 2nd Peter is *Experiencing God's Grace In the Midst of Suffering*. The word, "suffer," is found thirteen times in this epistle (**1 Peter 2:19, 20, 21**; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:1, 15, 16, 19; 5:10). The word, "grace," is found eight times in the letter. In 1st and 2nd Peter we are going to listen to a man that had already endured tremendous trials of suffering in his lifetime, and hear what he has to say about how to endure it with grace. Most of us have no idea what it is to suffer as these first century Christians did. We may soon learn. But, if we are going to endure it joyfully with God's grace, it certainly would benefit us to glean the wisdom found in these two marvelous letters.

Transition

² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible: King James Version, Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 1881.

This morning, after having given you the background to these epistles, I want to briefly examine these introductory verses, which will assure us that even in the midst of suffering we are saved and secure.

I. We Have Been Selected for Grace (vs. 2)

Before we consider this often misunderstood subject of election, let us first notice that the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught here. Our God is triune – three in one: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Not three separate gods, but One God in three persons. (For more verses declaring the Trinity see Matthew 3:16 – 17; 28:19 – 20; John 14:16; 2 Corinthians 13:14; **1 John 5:7**)

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7)

Each member of the Godhead is involved in salvation:

- We were chosen by the Father

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:" (Ephesians 1:3-4)

- We were redeemed by the Son

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" (Ephesians 1:5-7)

- We were sealed by the Spirit

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Now regarding election – don't make election to be something it is not. We are elect; we are chosen; but so is everyone who themselves choose to receive Christ as Saviour. The "elect" are the whosoever wills.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17)

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13 KJV)

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20 KJV)

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

God chose to create a world.

God chose to create man to live in that world and fellowship with Him.

God knew that man would sin against Him.

God chose to devise a plan for man's redemption by sending His own Son to shed His blood and die on the Cross.

God chose to offer that redemption to anyone and everyone who were willing to put their faith in His Son.

God foreknew all of this before He even created the world. He also foreknew you, and foreknew what you and I would be facing today; and just as He had a plan for our salvation, He also has a plan for all that we face today – we can trust Him, folks. He knows what He is doing, and He knows what we are going to have to do as well.

Notice the phrase – “sprinkling of the blood” – this is an allusion to the sacrificial blood that had to be sprinkled or applied to the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement; or on the doorposts of the house as in the first Passover. The blood must be applied. For the New Testament believer, the blood of Christ is applied to our account when we get saved – when we place our faith in Christ.

II. We have Been Saved By His Grace (vs. 3 and 4)

We have been “begotten again.” Peter uses a similar phrase in v. 23:

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

Jesus discussed the new birth with Nicodemus in John 3:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the

Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3-8)

You needed a new birth – a spiritual birth, because your sinful flesh and blood cannot enter into Heaven. The new birth enters you into God's family, and you get that new birth when you trust Christ as your Saviour.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" (John 1:12)

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:4-7)

Notice our inheritance in verse 4: it's waiting for us in Heaven. The devil's crown may be in charge right now down here - and only because God has allowed that – but in Heaven, our crowd is running the show. God has something very marvelous in store for us in Heaven.

This world is not our home.

I've got a mansion just over the Hilltop.

Whatever we may have to endure here on earth is only temporary, but Heaven is eternal.

III. We Are Secure Because of His Grace (vs. 5)

We are not only saved by His grace, we are safe (secure) by His grace. Your eternal position is secure, and your earthly journey is in His protective hands as well (John 10:27 – 30). He won't give you more than you can handle:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

He has got a plan and a purpose for your life, and you are secure here on earth until he is finished with you:

"And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee,

nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD." (1 Chronicles 28:20)

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" (Philippians 1:6)

Conclusion

Take comfort in the fact that you have been selected, saved, and secured by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Don't fear what little man can do to you down here. God's got you. His grace is sufficient for everything that you or I will have to face here on earth. His strength is made perfect in your weakness and fear (2 Corinthians 12:9). Just trust Him.

As things get crazier and crazier here in our nation, know that our God is above all of it, and He has positioned you right where He wants you. All you have to do is trust in His marvelous grace in the midst of the suffering.

