11-17-24

1 Peter 1:1-5

We are quite familiar with Simon Peter. He shows up often in the Gospel accounts and in the book of Acts. He is very likely the witness and human authentication behind the Gospel according to Mark. And he has two letters that have become part of the inspired cannon of Scripture. It is amazing, and encouraging, to watch the impetuous and hard-headed man we read about in the Gospel accounts become the gracious and Christ-centered man of these letters. There is hope for all of us; in Christ, of course.

He identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word “apostle” simply means “sent one”. But when associated with Jesus, it goes to a unique level. The apostles who followed immediately after Jesus were endowed with great power from the Holy Spirit. They were able to preach with great unction and prophesy, they performed many miracles, they were given special understanding regarding the things of God; and perhaps most wonderful, they were able to write Scripture. The writings we have from the apostles were inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit. They are true words. The words of God.

As I mentioned, this type of apostle was unique; we don’t have this spiritual office anymore. We don’t need it because the cannon of Scripture is closed. The Bible makes it clear that what God has revealed to us is sufficient until His return. For example, in Ephesians 2 Paul says that we the saints are of God’s household, “*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone*.” Once a foundation is laid, you don’t mess with it; especially if it is a perfect foundation with absolutely no flaws. Beware of any who claim to have the office of apostle.

I think that currently there are those who are sent by God through Jesus Christ to preach and proclaim His word; in that manner they are “sent ones”. But we normally call them “missionaries”, because the title apostle connotates all the other gifts the twelve and Paul had.

This letter that came through the pen of Peter was directed by the Holy Spirit; so what we have here is the word of God. The word of God is living and active; even though it was written long ago to Jews scattered throughout what we would call the country of Turkey, it is good for us and applies to us here and now.

The Jews Peter was writing to were probably descendants of those who had been deported by the Assyrians and relocated to these countries. They were living in a terribly pagan land. They had two problems that would have led to them being persecuted: they were Jews, and now they were Christians. On top of that, the Old Testament was clear that being driven out of their homeland was a curse of judgement. So they would have also been feeling under the curse of God.

We currently live in what we might call post-Christian America; we live in a pagan land. Any who are pagans are driven by their master, satan, and they will not tolerate those who are of Christ. Now, currently in our country, we still have many legal rights to practice our Christian life and hold our beliefs. But more and more, we face opposition. Keep in mind though, that there are many of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world who are facing persecution. We aren’t to that point; and it is not wise to hope for it.

Peter knew that the persecuted people he was writing to needed encouragement. The persecuted Christians of the world need encouragement. We who are dealing with opposition need encouragement.

So Peter gives us all encouragement: We are promised a glorious future, Jesus has won for us riches and peace beyond what we can imagine. We have eternal life promised to us; and promise and a hope that the rest of the world doesn’t have: and that is why they oppose and persecute us.

In Christ, the curse is removed since He became a curse for us as He was hung on a tree. That would have been important to the Jews who had been displaced. They may not have been living back in the land God gave their ancestors, but part of their inheritance would be a new Promised Land that far surpassed the land of Canaan. Jesus has taken any curse we might be under; that is, the curse brought about by Adam. We also have a new home awaiting us.

The Holy Spirit is using all our troubles and afflictions to sanctify us; to make us more like Christ; to prepare us for the “*eternal weight of glory*” as Paul puts it. (2 Cor 4:17) Think about that: the Bible lets us know that if we were to see the face of God in our current sinful state, we would die. If we were to be given the glory that God has ready for us as we are now, we would not be able to stand it. Our troubles in this life build our strength so that we can bear the weight of our glorious sinless being with Jesus.

By the way, this does not mean that we are to seek out tribulation. Leave it to God to bring what is needed when it is needed. That is more of the beauty we see here in Peter’s words. Depend on God; He has it taken care of. He is the One who will work things out. However, in the mystery of how all this works, we don’t just sit back and do nothing; we must cooperate with what the Holy Spirit is working in our lives.

Peter encourages us with the thought of inheritance. As believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we have an inheritance waiting for us; all due to the work of Christ on the cross, accomplished according to the merciful desire of God. And so, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*”. That statement seems so simple, yet it is impossible for us to comprehend. Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, coequal to and one with God the Father. Yet Jesus claims Yahweh as His God and Father.

Perhaps we can think in terms of the man, Jesus. He was subject to the God of the Bible; Yahweh is His God. At the same time, because Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, Yahweh is also His Father. So, one and the same almighty spiritual Being is both Jesus’ God and Father. Well, if we come to Jesus as our Saviour, then God will accept us and will be our God; furthermore, when we come to Christ, God adopts us as His children: He becomes our Father. This is the beginning of our inheritance: the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also our God and Father. And God was pleased to make this possible. So yes, blessed is He.

And this goes further because God’s not going to adopt dead people; and all of us are dead to God due to sin. As promised in the Garden of Eden, sin brings about death. It brings about eventual physical death, but it also brings about immediate spiritual death. All who walk this earth apart from Christ are spiritually dead. That is why they don’t understand that they are slaves of satan. That is why they have a very distorted view of right and wrong. That is why they can’t comprehend the uselessness of depending on people to straighten out this would. That, by the way, is why we must present to them the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This goes back to Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus when He said in John 3:3, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” This is a spiritual rebirth; this is our spirit coming back to life after sin caused its death; this is regeneration. And now that our spirit is alive we are able to have the living hope that Peter mentions. Our faith and hope are made alive by the Holy Spirit and by Him we know that salvation through Jesus Christ is real. The world doesn’t have that kind of hope and the hope they do have is constantly shattered by reality. Again, that is why we need to share the Gospel.

The gift of faith given by the Holy Spirit allows us to believe in the historical account of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was crucified, He died, He was buried, and He came back to physical life in His own body yet it was also somehow glorified. We believe this but there is more. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “*But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.*” If Jesus is the first fruits, then we who are believers are the rest of the harvest.

We have been sprinkled with the cleansing blood of Jesus. By our faith in Him and His work on the cross, we have undergone a spiritual resurrection, and we now have a living and sure hope that we will also undergo a physical resurrection receiving a glorified body. The only reason we call it hope is because it hasn’t happened yet; we know it will. And all this comes through the mercy of God. Yes, blessed is He.

In the resurrection of Christ, we look forward to an inheritance from God. The idea of inheritance would have been very important to the Jewish culture of the day. It is important to us also, because our inheritance through Christ involves our eternal life. What we will have as we exist in eternity. The Bible doesn’t go into much detail about what exactly our inheritance will consist of; but we are told of a couple things and even they are more than we could possibly hope for.

We receive a Promised Land; God will create new heavens and a new earth. It will be free of the curse brought about by Adam and we will dwell there in beauty and spender. Additionally, our inheritance is Jesus Himself. As Christians we are in Christ now and He is in us. A time will come when that union has no interference from sin or evil. It’s hard to imagine what that will be like, but we know that it will be worth every difficulty we face in this life once we attain it.

Peter tells us a few things about the inheritance we will receive through Christ by the mercy of God; the inheritance we truly hope to receive based upon the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Our inheritance has none of the characteristics of the things of this world. First it is imperishable. It will never go away. What was said in Psalm 16:10 applies to Jesus: *Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.* Jesus’ body saw no corruption in the grave and it never will. He is imperishable.

Our inheritance will be undefiled. There will be no sin in the new earth. And Jesus who was always without sin will remain so. Second Corinthians 5:21, “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf.*” Jesus is undefiled.

Our inheritance will not fade away. God’s new creation will last forever. And so will Jesus. Hebrews 13:8 tells us, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*.” There is no fading with the eternal God.

Finally, our inheritance already exists and it is waiting there just for us. In John 14:2 Jesus said: *In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

The Jews who received this letter from Peter received reassurance in verse 5; and so do we. We don’t go through all this by ourselves; according to our own strength. We are protected by the power of God. This is in 2 Peter 2:9, “*the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment*.” Here is good motivation to be among the godly by being a follower of Jesus. God is able to protect His people and He will do so.

Notice however the words “*through faith*”. Although God will protect us by rescuing us from temptation, we must never take that as an invitation to tempt God. We do our best to escape temptation, we must never play with it. Like Paul says, “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.*” (1 Cor 10:12) This is what pride will lead to. There is no room for pride in the heart of a Christian. It is when we are humble and wary that we will receive the Lord’s protection.

We are protected by God so that we may receive salvation by which He is glorified. Salvation is an odd thing; it has three parts and Peter is referring to the third part here.

At the moment we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we are saved. Acts 16:31, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*”At that moment our sins are forgiven and our guilt is wiped away. Eternal life is ours. But we don’t have it yet; we still live here and must deal with evil.

Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12, “*work out your salvation with fear and trembling*.” If we have truly accepted Christ, then that will be demonstrated in how we live. We should be a new creation; and part of that is that we are concerned to please our Saviour. We are concerned to live a life that imitates Jesus and we desire to follow His commands. This is the lifelong sanctification process, enabling us to bear the weight of coming glory.

Then as Peter mentions, “*a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*.” This is the consummation of our salvation, when we stand before Jesus ready to receive our inheritance. When we begin our life with Him forever. And it will be in front of everybody. Those who are true followers of Jesus will be displayed before the world; before all those who have ever existed; before all those who refused the offer of salvation in Jesus. And what glory will be given to God when all His saints are revealed to creation. The proof that He is the God of the impossible; the God who is able to save.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Prayer

Blessed Lord God, what an encouragement You are to us. We Your people look upon this dark and dying world and yet we have hope because of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; whom we confess is Your only begotten Son who came to save the world. What amazing proof You have offered us to maintain this hope in the resurrection of Jesus. Our last enemy death was not able to hold Him and will soon be vanquished by Him.

Holy Spirit, help and guide us. Keep our eyes focused on our Saviour Jesus. The world cries for our attention; it offers decaying bobbles, it lures us to temporary pleasures, all of which lead to death and will fade away. Protect us by Your mighty power and shield us from temptation. Keep pride far from us so that we do not tempt our untemptable God and bring disgrace upon ourselves.

Lord God, we greatly desire to see our Saviour Jesus and You our Father glorified. Strengthen us that we may reflect the precious light of Jesus into this world. His light can open the eyes of the blind and raise the dead spirits. May we be useful servants to You; use us as You will to build the Kingdom of Christ.

We lift these things up to You in Jesus’ name

Amen