

1 Peter 1:3-12

Introduction

It has been said, that John is the Apostle of Love, Paul the Apostle of Faith, and Peter is the Apostle of Hope.

There is so much in this passage that it is difficult to know where to begin, the same is true in our world, there is so much happening, that we sometimes have to stop and catch our breath and say, “what is going on?” The question comes, How does this affect my life and what does God’s Word have to say about it. I want to look at how I think Peter may address what is happening in our spiritual lives today.

Tradition tells us that the Apostle Peter spent the last years of his ministry and life in Rome. It is very possible that he was there when Nero burnt the city of Rome, and

then blamed the Christians as a scapegoat. Peter saw the beginning of a great wave of persecution and he wrote to the churches to encourage them during times of trials and tribulation.

The world was in turmoil, our world is in turmoil today. . When facing life’s trials, we often come up with life’s crucial questions, is what we believe real? Is our faith able to see us through? It was John Wesley who brought those questions into focus for me. John Wesley said, I want to know one thing, I want to know how to get to heaven.

During the Holidays, Macy’s always has a big theme, this year theme was “Believe”. Every time I saw that I kept asking myself, what do they want us to “believe in?” In Santa Claus, in the world, in capitalism...Those things have a lot to offer, but they cannot offer a hope, that is

real, that is not just off in the future but here right now, that is ours through faith. We need something to believe in. We have a message of hope, and faith. .

Peter helps gives us the answer to that question. He reminds us that faith is the key that will help us find the answer to life's questions and see us through difficult trials.

The goal of faith is the salvation of your souls
Salvation is an umbrella term, there are several terms that just jump out at you as you read this passage. The word "salvation" applies to all aspects of our spiritual lives. Once there was a Salvation Army lady traveling on a train from London. She sat down next to someone and wanted to start witnessing to him She asked him if he was saved. He answered, yes I am saved, saved and saved. She did not know that the person she was sitting across from was the Archbishop of Canterbury. He went

on to explain. I am saved from the sins of my past, I am saved by the grace of God right now, and by God's grace I will be saved as I enter eternity. Salvation deals with every aspect of our spiritual lives. From the moment the Holy Spirit starts working in our lives, to our being born again, our regeneration, our sanctification, and our glorification. In this first part of the chapter Peter focuses on our regeneration and inheritance in Christ Jesus. But it is by not accident that the next section, he represents God's call to holiness. Just as he who has called you is Holy, be holy in all you do. That's a different sermon.

Another umbrella term is the term "grace" Dr. Powers in his commentary on 1st Peter mentions that grace is synonymous with the word salvation. I believe that grace is also synonymous with the Holy Spirit. There are many definitions of grace, but one that has stuck with me is grace is God working in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sins, and leads us to the cross where that sin is forgiven. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be freed from the power and grip of sin on our lives. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us assurance that our sins are forgiven and that Jesus is Lord. The beginning, middle and end of the Christian life is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Peter says you **are receiving the goal of your faith the salvation of your souls**. I want to be a little cautious here. Because it is so easy to think that Peter is just talking about our souls. The soul is not some nebulous spirit that leaves our body when we die, that is not what he means. Peter is a Hebrew and he thinks in terms of the whole person body, soul, and spirit. IF we try to separate those, we are doing the scriptures an injustice. More so we are doing ourselves one, to think that we can compartmentalize our spiritual lives.

The goal of faith is the salvation of our souls that comes through grace. I am reminded of Paul's words. "For it is by grace that you are saved through faith, it is the gift of God not of works, so that no one can boast..

What if, grace is God's gift to us, could it be that faith is our gift to God? Let's go back to that word, "Believe".

The world tells us to believe but does not tell us what to believe in other than ourselves. Peter says believe, but believe in Jesus Christ. The world says believe in what you can see. Peter says, having not seen you love him and though you do not see him, yet believing you have joy unspeakable and full of glory. That is what the world cannot give. There is Peter's definition of faith. Faith is believing in Jesus Christ, even though you have not seen him personally.

Faith in Jesus Christ came with a painful side, faith was costly. In Peter's day faith marked the people socially and

religiously as outcasts, aliens, outsiders from their world. Grace and faith, they go together. The goal of faith is the salvation of your souls, it is not something that is off in the future, Peter is trying to remind us it is a present reality. He begins this section by first trying to remind them of:

In His great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope. Hope, in the New Testament always relates to a future good, yet here Peter is trying to remind them and us, that we have been born again in to a living hope. The world may offer you a lot of things, it may offer fame, fortune, prestige, and power. But it cannot offer you anything beyond this life. It does not have a hope that goes beyond this world.

Peter reminds us that for the Christian, hope is not wishful thinking, it is a firm conviction. That being born

again, does not mark us as an outsider, but rather as an insider. Being a Christian is a blessing not a curse, when your life is in turmoil we need to count our blessings.

We have a living hope because we have a living Savior. The very power that raised Jesus from the dead is the very power that is at work in our lives. That changes us so radically that it can be said that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus. We have an inheritance that goes beyond space and time; that reaches out into eternity, an inheritance that is ours here and now.

An inheritance that can never perish, though Satan and the world may try to ravage our lives, it cannot destroy our inheritance.

An inheritance that can never spoil: or be polluted by the stains and immoralities of this old world.

An inheritance that can never fade-flowers fade or silver will get tarnished. But this inheritance will never grow dim. It is kept in heaven for you who through faith are shielded by God's power

A couple of summers ago, we went to Germany to visit our children and grandchildren. As we were traveling on the autobahn, I saw this tower standing alone in the hillside. My son-in-law explained, the towers were there to guard the countryside from invading armies. They were the front lines of protection for the people.

Peter reminds us In our journey we are protected by the power of God through faith. The Holy Spirit stands guard in our lives all of our days. Jesus said, I would never leave you nor forsake you. When we have faith, even when we do not see him, He is standing right beside us. It is not that God saves us from all the troubles, sorrows,

trials and the problems of life; but he enables us to conquer them and march on.

In this passage here is something that has always fascinated me. Peter says, "who through faith are shielded by God's power that is ready to be revealed in the last time, In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials..."

We take the phrase "in the last time" to refer to when the world will come to an end." It does mean that, but in the Greek, it can also mean, when the worst, comes to the worst, When things have reached their limit, then the saving power of God will be revealed. For the believer persecution and troubles are not the end, beyond lies our hope of glory, our inheritance in Jesus Christ. As long as we have faith, we have hope, that we have something to

look forward to, we can endure anything this world tosses at us.

One more note, Peter says you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. The word that Peter uses for “all kinds” he uses twice in this book. Here in this passage here it refers to all kinds of trials. Literally it means – trials of many colors. The second place that Peter uses it is in chapter 4:10 to refer to God’s grace. Our trials may be many colored, but so is the grace of God; there is no trial that God’s grace cannot match. There is grace to match every trial.

You are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Peter says this in the present tense. It is not just something off in the future it is a present reality.

A young preacher, tried to get a pastorate, everywhere he tried out, after one or two sermons, they told him to

leave. One of his friends decided to set in on one of his sermons. Later in conversation, he told him, you have to get rid of that philosophy stuff you are preaching. You need to preach faith.

His friend said, to him, how can I preach faith if I am not sure I have it. His friend answered, “Preach faith until you have it and when you have it you will preach it.” That changed John Wesley’s life and preaching.

We have a message of faith that we need to proclaim to our world. We have a message of hope. More than that, because we believe, we have an inheritance in heaven through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. Does your faith have a goal? The salvation of our souls is here and now.