

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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MOVING TOWARD A BETTER LIFE

I Peter 1:8-24

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INTRODUCTION: Last week, I gave some background on the epistle of First Peter. I believe it was written by Peter, although some claim he did not write it for different reasons. The letter was written to the churches scattered throughout an area called Asia Minor which today is known as Turkey.

Peter opened his letter by defining the recipients: the elect and exiled. He introduces the doctrines of election and sanctification. When he spoke about Jesus he specifically says “sprinkled with his blood”, an image that would have taken the Christian Jews back to their roots with the high priest entering the holy of holies and sprinkling blood on a sacrifice to atone for the nation’s sins.

Then he speaks about the living hope, that of eternal life after we die. Let’s pick up with verse 8.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:8-11

Though you have not seen him, [meaning Jesus] you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

EXPLANATION: This is clearly talking about the Old Testament prophets. In today's Christian culture, I believe prophecy is both misunderstood and abused.

Verse 10 tells us about what prophets did:

- They spoke of the coming grace.
- They carefully sought truth.
- They were sensitive to the Spirit of Christ.

Notice clearly that Peter is talking about the prophets before the time of Christ. Not only that, he says "Spirit of Christ" not Spirit of Jesus. In many cases, these two terms could be interchangeable, but the word Christ means risen Lord. This is very interesting because Peter is saying that the prophets before the time of Christ had the Spirit of the Risen Lord before he had even been born.

The prophets had deep spiritual insight that the common person did not have. This insight provided a window into the future in such a way, that in their minds, it was as real and sure as if the future had already happened. For example, the prophet Isaiah speaks about the crucifixion of Jesus in the past tense, as if it had already happened.

Verse 11 says they sought out the time and circumstances concerning the suffering of Jesus and the glories that would follow. What we know on this side of it, is that while many things were revealed to them, not everything was. Circumstances were revealed to them but they weren't given a timeline. The scripture tells us that God fulfills his plan "in the fullness of time". In a way we cannot understand, he does not operate in our time frame. He operates outside of time since he is not bound by his own creation of time.

Verse 12 gives us another truth about the prophets.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:12

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

EXPLANATION: There's a powerful statement: *They were not serving themselves but you.* It goes to reason that the prophets might have thought of themselves as the elite...those with spiritual insight that others did not have. They could have kept these insights to themselves, but they did not. Why? Because they weren't in it for themselves. They were in it for others. A good way to discern a false prophet is whether the person is truly in it for the sake of others. I believe we have a lot of false prophets today. The spiritually gullible are sucked into their clever messages.

Now we see that the people receiving Peter's letter had already heard about the Old Testament prophecies from preachers who were filled with the Holy Spirit. You may remember last week and many other times when I've said we must understand these people did not have scriptures lying around the house. Of course, the New Testament had not come together yet and having one's own copy of what we call the Old Testament would have been rare as well. With the churches in Asia Minor, that gap was made up by preachers who knew the scriptures and were filled with the Holy Spirit to teach them. Then there is a side note in verse 12: *"Even angels long to look into these things."*

We are glad to have the New Testament, but if we did not, then we could still find Christ in the Old Testament. I don't believe Peter realized that a New Testament would be born and that his letters would become a part of them.

Next, Peter shares the call to be holy.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

The Greek word for sober here means "uninfluenced by intoxicants" and the usage refers to having clear judgment and self-control, and having one's faculties about them. This is the opposite of being irrational.

APPLICATION: Now, in your alert and sober state, Peter writes, set your hope on the end goal. And what is that? The furthest we can see by faith is the hope of God's grace revealed when Jesus returns.

We become disillusioned when our hope is not set on the end goal but diverted onto other things, other distractions. We can get so caught up in the challenges of the moment that we lose perspective. This whole Covid mess is a perfect example. I am guessing very few have considered God's will in all of it. I am guessing very few have considered what God is trying to show them through it. I challenged some pastors a while back to reconsider their words because some of them were spewing gloom and doom and conspiracy stories, and they were **completely missing the opportunity to share the hope in Christ**. You see, it's easy for even us preachers to get caught up in the moment and lose focus of the end goal.

I wonder if, at the end of this early life, if we have the ability to look back, will we realize that we missed the point many times? Will we realize that we had a clear focal point yet spent most of our lives too near-sighted to see it?

So Peter said to be sober and focus on the hope of God's grace revealed when Jesus returns. Next, He said to be obedient.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:14

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

EXPLANATION: What evil desires did the people in the first century have? Do you think times were more innocent then? I do not think so. Their evil desires were the same as our evil desires today. Greed, desire for power, pride, jealousy, racism, sexual conquests. People conformed to their evil desires because they were ignorant. Ignorant of what? Ignorant of the ways of the Lord. And now, in Christ, their ignorance had been removed. Romans 12:2 tells us *not to conform to the image of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. And of course that scripture means that minds are transformed through the spirit of God.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:15-16

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

God expects his people to be holy. He sets the example. He does not ask anyone to be anything he is not.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:17

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

I like the impartial father, don't you? He does not show favoritism. The idea of being a foreigner is that you respect the rules and the culture of the land you are visiting.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:18-20

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Your salvation was not purchased with precious metals or money, but with the blood of Christ. Jesus, chosen before the creation of this world, is a recurring theme in scripture. I've spoken a few times about how the crucifixion transcends time and space. There was one crucifixion of Jesus that happened in human terms over 2,000 years ago, and in eternal time that same crucifixion was before the world began. It's difficult to understand and difficult to explain, but I believe the cross is where time and eternity intersect.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:21

Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

I don't know whether Peter had access to Paul's epistle to the Romans, but Romans 10:9 tell us: *That if you confess with your mouth 'the Lord Jesus' and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead you will be saved.* Belief in the resurrection is necessary for salvation.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.

This is an especially good verse for all believers. The natural response to the purification that comes through obeying the truth is sincere love for each other. I trust you are a member of a healthy congregation. If it is not healthy, if it's not full of sincere love, then something is wrong. Someone, or several, or many need to have their hearts purified by obeying the truth. The first sign of a congregation becoming unhealthy is when people stop caring for each other.

There are two types of love mentioned here in verse 22. According to the original Greek, the first love mentioned here is brotherly love - "phileo". The second mention of love is "agape" or unconditional love.

Translating anything from one language to another is not always easy. Things don't line up word-for-word. Language patterns are different between two languages.

Listen to I Peter 1:22 in a direct translation from Greek to English:

The souls of you having purified by obedience to the truth unto brotherly love sincere, out of purity of heart, one another love fervently.

It sounds all mixed up in English but to the Greek mind, it would have sounded normal.

Here's verse 22 in the New Living Translation: *You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.*

New American Standard: *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.*

Since we know two different words of love are used, one for brother love and one for unconditional love, please listen to this paraphrase.

Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a sincere brotherly-type love of the believers, now love one another from the heart unconditionally.

Brother love is step one. Unconditional love is step two – and might I say more challenging. But this should reflect the body of Christ.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1:23-24

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. [And then Peter makes an authoritative appeal by quoting the Old Testament in Isaiah 40:]

²⁴ For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

Again, Peter gives us a clue that preachers were using the Old Testament scriptures in their preaching because that’s all they had.

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