

Last year during the Trinity Season we studied the First Epistle of Peter. I did get a number of positive comments on our study, and if you want to refresh yourselves, the sermons are all available on our website.

This year during Season of Trinity we are going to study the Second Epistle of Peter. It is my prayer that it will be as beneficial to our growth in our faith and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as was First Peter.

Second Peter was written to the same group of Christians as First Peter. If you recall, First Peter was written to the Christians of the dispersion – that is, those who had to leave their homes because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the resulting persecution. As we read in 1 Peter 1:1: “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,...*”

He went on to encourage them in their faith by telling them that they pilgrims here on earth – they were just passing through – but that they had a heavenly inheritance awaiting them. He then proceeded to give them various exhortations as to how they should live their lives here on earth.

Peter’s second letter was probably written shortly before his death 67-68 AD – and he makes reference to this in 2 Peter 1:12-14: “*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.*” Peter knew what was coming.

The occasion of his letter – and I would remind you that this is something that is still relevant today – is that false teachers had arisen from within the church. It seems that it was an early form of Gnosticism – which combined ideas from Greek philosophy, oriental mysticism and Christianity. It emphasized salvation through knowledge – hence it’s name, because *gnosis* is the Greek word of knowledge.

In the gnostic system the physical body was regarded as evil. Therefore, practice of Gnosticism involved either rigorous asceticism or blatant immorality – which seem to be evident because Peter addresses this. Other things that Peter addresses is those who deny the Lord, those who despise authority, along with slandering of celestial beings and also denying the second coming of Christ. We will look at what Peter says as we study the letter and it will have great practical implications as we live our lives here on this earth.

Second Peter is quite a bit shorter than First Peter, but he addresses these important issues. So, turn with me chapter 1 of Second Peter. I’d like to look at just the first two verses today – 2 Peter 1:1,2 (READ).

We see first of all that Peter identifies himself – Simon Peter. Simon was his given name and Peter was the name given him by the Lord Jesus Christ. He called him Cephas, which means rock.

Then Simon Peter identifies himself as to who he is – he is a bondservant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He basically is saying that he is a slave to Christ – who is his master. Peter was a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ — a servant being defined as “One who seeks to serve others; one seeks the good of others; one thinks of others before himself.” This is who Peter was – he lived to serve Christ – as we all should.

And that was based on the fact that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ. We know that the Apostles were

specifically chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ – he was one of only 14 – the original 12, Mathais who replaced Judas, and the Apostle Paul.

It was the Apostles whom our Savior commissioned to spread the gospel, as we read in Matthew 28:19-20: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” Amen.”

This is what the Apostles did – they went and made disciples – that is, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would note here that Jesus said: *go and make disciples* – he did not say go and make converts. Jesus was interested in those who would follow him and walk in a way that is pleasing to God.

It is because of what they did in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, that, as I have said before, all were executed for their faith in Christ, with the exception of the Apostle John.

Again, Peter took his commissioning seriously – as did all the Apostles. We are descendants of their fulfillment of our Savior’s commissioning. And this is exactly what Peter states in the next part of verse 1 – “*To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:*”

Think about these words for a moment – “*To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:*” What Peter is saying to the pilgrims of the dispersion – and to us – is that they and us have the same faith that those first apostles did.

We talk about the faith “once delivered unto the saints” – it is the same for us as it was for them. You can read the annals of church history – all those who did great things for God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ – the great theologians like Cramner, Hodge and Berkoff ... the great apologists like Luther and Calvin ... the great commentators like Matthew Henry and Albert Barnes ... the great missionaries like Hudson Taylor – and the list goes on and on.

All these – and every single Christian that has professed faith in Christ have the same faith as Peter and all the other apostles – *To those who have obtained like precious faith with us*. This, my friends is a marvelous truth – we are not 2nd class Christians who have a faith that is inferior to the apostles and other, more famous Christians.

As those who Peter is writing to – and again, I have to emphasize that he is writing to us – we too *have obtained like precious faith with us*.

He then tells us where that faith is from – *by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:*

Our faith is not in what we have done or will do but *by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ...*” As I have said on other occasions – Christianity is NOT a religion – but a faith. Religions say that one must do this and that in order to gain access to God. Without exception – this is true of all the other religions of the world.

But it is not true of Christianity – because Christianity is based on what God has done through the Lord Jesus Christ. It was God who sent His son in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ to be born, to live, to die and to rise

from the dead for the sins of those who believe in him. God has done it. All we need to do is believe what He has done.

It is because of the righteousness of Christ that we are saved. He was perfect. He kept the entire law for us. And then God accepted his sacrifice for our sins on the cross at Calvary.

As we read through the Old Testament, we saw all the sacrifices that God had ordained. But we also know, as we compare Scripture with Scripture, that all of these sacrifices looked forward to the one final and perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

And, as we have faith in the one final and perfect sacrifice of Christ – we are forgiven our sins and have access to God and all the other blessings of our salvation – having obtained a like precious faith. What a great an incredible blessing – and that is why the scriptures tell us that we cannot neglect so great a salvation.

God has done it all for us through the Lord Jesus Christ – all we need to do is believe and then follow – becoming disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Peter goes on, he then pronounces a blessing of his readers – and us – 2 Peter 1:2: “*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

Grace and peace come from God. We are saved by the grace of God – again the familiar Ephesians 2:8,9: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*”

And it is because of the grace of God that we now have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ – Colossians 1:20 says: “*and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*” And Ephesians 2:14-18 says: “*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*” Because of our faith in Christ, we are no longer at war with God.

We know that this grace and peace has come to us *in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord*. Indeed what a marvelous salvation we have – praise be to God.

So let us think about the fact that we have the same faith as Peter and all the other Apostles – that we indeed are to be disciples of Christ – just as Peter was.