

The Promises • 2 Peter 1:1-4

INTRODUCTION • Different Style Now; Verse by verse

Read 2 Pet 1:1-4

1. 2 Peter is the great Apostle's Swan Song

- a. He knows his time is running out. He can see the last grains in the hourglass.
- b. So like the Apostle Paul in 2 Tim., Peter here passes along his final words.

2. He sees a couple things afoot in the Church that concern him, so he addresses them.

3. There are 2 challenges facing God's people . . .

FIRST In some places around the Roman Empire, the persecution Peter had warned of in his first letter has now broken out.

- a. Xians are being arrested & beaten. Some are even being executed.
- b. Life's become inordinately hard for these persecuted believers.
- c. And this has moved some to back down & cool off in their devotion to Christ.
- d. While persecution stimulated some to even greater faithfulness, others freaked out & backed away.
- e. Peter urges his readers under persecution to stay centered in Christ and not give up or fall away.

SECOND In other places, the problem wasn't persecution, it was success!

- a. We know that during the first couple centuries persecution was never Empire wide; it was spotty/erratic; both in duration and location.
- b. The governor of one region might enforce a campaign of persecution while the province next door tolerated believers.
- c. But a few months or years later, when Roman officials moved, things could change.
- d. It wasn't until the mid to late 3rd C that a couple Emperors conducted a wide-spread campaign against the Church.
- e. So while persecution troubled the followers of Jesus in some places, others ignored them altogether & they were allowed to live & worship as they pleased.
- f. In these places, they thrived, prospered and grew.
- g. The problem *they* faced was false teachers who twisted Scripture.
 - 1) These guys merged Greek philosophy w/Eastern cults & wrapped it all up in Xian terminology.
 - 2) It all morphed into a mish-mash that would later be called **Gnosticism**.
 - 3) The closest thing today, and it shares some of the same ideas, is Scientology.
 - 4) And like Scientology, the way to progress was to pay a Gnostic teacher to guide you into every increasing levels of mystical enlightenment.
- h. In reality, these Gnostic teachers were ripping people off. They hid their greed behind a religious mask.

4. Peter, that Apostle Jesus charged w/taking care of His flock, saw all this & was deeply concerned.

- a. Seeing that his time was about up, he penned this letter to all his readers back to basics
- b. To remind them the life they have IN CHRIST is amazing!
- c. It's a treasure to be enjoyed & guarded.

5. So, as we dive in now, let me remind you of **some** of what the Word says we really are **IN CHRIST**.

- a. If you're born again, here's what God's Word says about you . . . >> **IN CHRIST!**
- b. You are a **new creation**; the old is past and all things have become new in you.
- c. You are **forgiven** for all your sins; past, present and future.
- d. You **stand** before a holy God, in the **perfect righteousness** of His Son.
- e. You are **without blame**.
- f. You are a **child** of God.
- g. His **beloved**.
- h. **Accepted** w/o reservation. You're not on probation.
- i. Privileged to call God, "Abba – Papa – Daddy."
- j. Invited, not just to visit Him, but to perpetually DWELL in His intimate presence.
- k. You are the bride of Christ, soo to reign w/Him.
- l. You are sealed by the HS, proving you belong to God and will be redeemed to Him.
- m. You are a saint, and as such, God includes you in wghat He's doing in the story history's telling.

- n. In Christ, you are on mission: There's purpose & meaning to your life
 6. And **THAT** is what Peter says in these 1st vs. we'll look at now.
 - ¹ Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
 1. Just those words move me to **PREACH!**
 2. Simon = **Simeon**; his natural name; the 1 his parents tagged him with.
 - a. It means "Heard." >> He was named after Jacob's 2nd son by his 1st wife Leah.
 - b. She'd asked God for another child & God **heard** her, so she named him "Heard = Simeon."
 3. "**Peter**" is the name **Jesus** gave him. It means **Rock**.
 - a. As we read Peter's story before he started following Jesus, he was anything but a rock.
 - b. He was **impetuous & unstable**. "Double-minded" or "Shifty" is a good description of Simeon.
 - c. So while his name **meant** "Heard", what people **thought of** when they thought of him was someone unstable & untrustworthy.
 - d. Then 1 day Jesus called the professional fisherman to leave his boat & nets & follow Him.
 - e. Jesus called him out of his **old life as Simeon** into a totally **new & different life as Peter**, a **Rock**.
 4. Those 1st 2 words, *Simeon Peter*, are a whole testimony; a glorious story of the change Jesus makes in a life.
 - a. We're born into this world as lost sinners; tagged w/some label by our parents.
 - b. We muddle thru as best we can, wondering what the point of it all is.
 - c. Then Jesus steps into our story & invites us to follow Him.
 - d. We're born-**again**, & discover a new life awaits, one **SO new**—we need a new name.
 - e. Rev. 2:17 says when we arrive in Heaven, we'll learn what our **REAL** name is; the 1 **God** picked for us.
 5. Just as Jesus turned **Shifty** into **Rocky**; He makes the Weak, Strong; the Hard become Soft.
 - a. He makes the Broken, Whole. The Blind becomes a Visionary. The Mute, a Preacher.
 - b. God specializes in taking sinners & turning them into saints.
 6. Next Peter says he's **both a bondservant & apostle** of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Bondservant – **slave**; a despised class in the world of that time.
 - b. While **Apostle** was a title of great honor; think **ambassador**.
 7. By uniting these titles, slave & apostle, we know Peter embraced what Jesus taught when He said the greatest was the servant of all.
 - a. When you live In & For Jesus, being an apostle is no greater than being a slave; and being a slave is no lower than being an apostle.
 - b. The world is so hung up on titles.
 - 1) Some people demand you call them Dr.
 - 2) Others spend years climbing the promotion ladder & when they finally attain their goal think they're better than others.
 - c. But once the Spirit of God opens your eyes to the truth, you realize worldly titles mean little.
 - d. As the Psalmist said, better to be a **doorkeeper** of the Lord than a **king** of wickedness. [84:10]
 8. Peter goes on . . .
- To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:
1. That word "obtained" is really interesting.
 - a. It was used of casting lots when they fell to your favor.
 - b. We speaking of something **falling into our lap** & it means exactly the same thing.
 - c. There's nothing we do; we exert no effort, in receiving what's bestowed.
 2. Jesus did the work, we earn the benefit.
 3. And the salvation He bestows on us ushers us into a "**like precious faith**" w/Peter & the other apostles.
 - a. We enjoy **equal privileges** w/them.
 - b. You may remember how Peter took great pains in his 1st letter to identify himself as **equal** to his readers.
 - c. He was on the same spiritual level with them. He does the same here.
 - 1) Yes as an Apostle, he had a unique role to play.
 - 2) But that didn't make him **better** or **higher** than others.

- 3) There's no spiritual hierarchy in the Church.
- 4) No popes, cardinals, bishops – and the rest of the riff-raff.
- 5) There's not even supposed to be a distinction between clergy & laity.
- 6) There's no place up here I'm allowed to go, you can't.
4. So let's get a hold of what this means.
 - a. Peter's mission was to serve Jesus as an Apostle.
 - b. He wasn't elevated above others or made into some special spiritual ruler.
 - c. He was just different from others in terms of his assignment; his mission.
 - d. What's YOUR assignment / Mission? >> I can tell you what it's NOT.
 - 1) Your mission is not to be a pew-sitter / chair-sitter / space-filler.
 - 2) Your calling is not to be a consumer of religious entertainment.
 - e. In Eph. 4, Paul says we're all members of the Body of Christ & as each of us faithfully plays our part, we all grow together into something marvelous.
 - f. You know what we call a part of a body that lives for itself; that just takes & never contributes? A tumor.
5. I say this in my calling & role as your pastor who's not above or better than you
 - a. Whether you're a long-time follower of Jesus or brand new,
 - b. Discover your calling; mission, & get to it!
- ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,
 1. You experienced Bible students hang with me while we cover some familiar ground.
 2. It's great to know there are people here this morning who've never studied these great words that open so many of the NT letters.
 3. When Peter says "Grace & Peace" he unites the common Greco-Roman greeting of "Charis = Grace" w/the Jewish greeting "Shalom = Peace."
 - a. What we need to know is that in many places, Gentiles & Jews utterly hated each other.
 - b. The bigotry & prejudice was fierce. >> Picture the tension between Skinheads & La Raza & you have an idea of how bad it was in some places around the Empire.
 4. But wherever a church began to grow, the old hatred of entrenched bigotry & prejudice disintegrated.
 5. Faith in Jesus trumps color & ethnicity; language, political parties, ideologies, socio-economic distinctions, preferences for clothing or musical styles, allegiances to sports teams.
 6. I rejoice that we're such a diverse congregation. But you know what we need more of? **PEOPLE!**
 - a. We should all want to be part of a **growing** church.
 - b. We are; but that must never stop because God wants MORE people to come to faith, come to Jesus.
 - c. What people? **ALL of them.**
 7. Peter prays God's grace & peace will be **multiplied** to them; that it will grow **exponentially**.
 - a. Picture a hose w/a **trickle** of water coming out.
 - b. The trickle grows in volume to become a stream, then grows more until it's blasting out the end like a fire-hose. >> That's the idea here.
 - c. Peter knows that grace & peace make way for **more** grace & peace.
 - d. God's grace works in such a way that it increases our capacity to both **receive & give MORE**.
 8. But Peter understands that grace & peace work together **to a specific end**; & **that** is to enhance our **knowledge** of God.
 - a. But this word "knowledge" is much more than mere intellectual awareness of a set of facts.
 - b. Peter doesn't mean knowledge ABOUT God; He means actually knowing God Himself; **experiencing** Him Being in **intimate fellowship** w/Him.
 9. I want to be clear about something this morning.
 - a. As a **preacher** of the Word, I aim to **announce Truth** >> I'm a **herald** who **proclaims** the Gospel.
 - b. As a **teacher** of the Bible, my goal is to **bring understanding** of the things of God.
 - c. **But** as your **brother** in Christ, my ambition is that the work of God's grace in me would bless & inspire you to go deeper & deeper in **your** relationship with the Lord.
 10. I know God because Jesus saved me & introduced me to Him.
 - a. I now talk to God and He talks to me; thru Scripture & the Spirit.

- b. God has opened my eyes to things a never saw before coming to faith in Him.
 - c. He's answered prayer. He's healed me. He's used me.
 - d. I've felt His love.
 - d. I've also experienced conviction as He's gently shown me where I got off track with Him.
 - e. There's been the sweetness of forgiveness when I've repented & confessed.
 - f. Very simply = God is REAL to me.
 - g. The atheist can argue & say there is no God, that it's all my imagination & wish-projection.
 - h. He can say that belief in God is an evolutionary artifact, a vestigial paradigm, the ghost of the God-gene that will soon mutate out of the human genome.
 - i. Bespeckled & lab-coated eggheads spouting \$25 words in long dissertations on why there is no God are going to have no effect on me because I know Him. He's my Father.
 - j. And because of grace I'm getting to know Him more as each day passes.
11. Vs. 2-4 are 1 sentence. Like Paul, once Peter got going, speaking of the greatness of our salvation, it was hard to put a period on it.
12. He just could not say enough about the life Jesus won for us & has brought us into.
13. Look at what he says here . . .
- ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.
- 1. God's power has bestowed on us ***all & everything*** we need to ***sustain & grow*** this new life which connects us to God & makes us more like Him.
 - 2. Peter says it's as we set ourselves to know God; going deeper & deeper into Him, that life is maximized.
 - 3. What do you want to know?
 - a. Some people are nuts for ***trivia***. They devour books like tortilla chips in the hope not matter what people are talking about, they'll be able to weigh in and sound erudite & wise.
 - b. Others want to learn some skill.
 - 1) They want to play a musical instrument.
 - 2) Or pick up some talent that will entertain themselves & others and people will praise them for.
 - 3) Some want to learn a sport.
 - c. And to this end of gathering knowledge, they spend hundreds of hours & dollars.
 - d. They take lessons, watch videos, read & practice.
 - 4. Xian: Here's what Jesus said was to occupy us Matthew 6:33
Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
 - 5. The ***best life is eternal life***.
So listen to what Jesus prayed for us in John 17:3. He says this to His Father
This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, & Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
 - 6. One of the first things the believer who knows God realizes, is how totally INTO IT God is.
 - a. If we could say God is ***eager***, then He's eager for this
 - b. That we'd make seeking Him our first priority & bottom line.
 - c. That we'd come to evaluate our lives by this single criteria – that we KNOW Him.
 - 7. Because THAT'S the basis by which transformation into Christ's image takes place in us. Look ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.
 - 8. Peter piles up the superlatives in describing God's promises. They are "exceedingly great & precious."
 - a. Exceedingly great = is an intensified form of the word "mega" > ***Super-mega***
 - b. Precious = ***Most*** precious. The idea here is that it's not only valuable; it's ***dear***.
 - 1) It's something treasured both in wealth & by the heart.
 - 2) Like the wedding ring on the finger of the widow who was married to her beloved for 50 yrs before he passed.
 - 3) It's made of gold & diamonds so worth a pile of cash.
 - 4) But she'd never sell it because of the memories that ring carries.
 - 9. Xian: God didn't just send Jesus to redeem your spirit so one day after you've lived a long a pitiful existence

on Earth you could die & go to Heaven.

- a. Eternal life doesn't begin after your die; it begins the moment you're born again.
- b. You've been ushered **out** of the old life connected to Adam, condemned to this curse-ridden world.
- c. And you've been given new life 2 Cor 5:17

If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

10. This new life **grows** & increasingly becomes your day to day experience as you walk with Jesus & grow by grace in the knowledge of God.

- a. This, His Word, is filled w/promises to you He wants you to discover & claim.
- b. Someone might ask, "Why does God wait for us to pray, claiming His promises? If He loves us, why doesn't he just go ahead & bless us."
- c. Well, the truth is, He does bless us in many ways before we ask Him.
- d. But there are other things He waits for us to pray for. And the reason why is because he DOES love us.
- e. But it's only in discovering God's promise, then staking our claim to it, that we realize just how much He loves us & how much it blesses Him when we look, ***in faith*** to Him.

11. Here's how I want to end today; by asking this question:

- a. Are the promises of God Peter speaks of here, ***to you*** want they were to him
Exceedingly great & precious?
- b. Are you as ***amped*** about knowing & growing in God as Peter says we ought to be?