

Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ

1 Peter 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

I've been thinking a lot of late about the changing attitudes in the world today and how it is affecting the culture all around us. Many in the church today are expressing concern at the general disregard for God and His rightful authority over society; but in a more particular sense as to how it is affecting the mentality of those who profess the Christian faith. As I thought on these things my thoughts turned to the instruction we, as the people of God, have from the first epistle of Peter concerning the trials and concerns that affected the church in the days of the believers then under the New Covenant established by our Lord by His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. The Church had been sent forth into all the world to preach Christ to those who had never heard. Those whom God had purposed to save from all eternity were responding with repentance and faith, but the world over all considered this arrival of what they considered a new religion as a threat to their culture, to their varied life styles. Today, in a very similar sense, with the changing views of right and wrong, it is becoming more evident that the world sees the Bible believing Christian as a threat to their new found cultural thinking, what, here in America, they might refer to as their new found liberties. How then are we, as those who believe in the eternal truths of Holy Scripture, to respond? I believe that the instruction that the Holy Spirit gave to the believers in the early days of the church under the New Covenant are applicable and of great value to us today. Thus I begin this series from the First Epistle of Peter to the elect pilgrims scattered throughout an unbelieving world. As an introduction to the epistle this morning, I want to consider; Peter's title; Peter's concerns that directed his purpose in writing to the elect of his day, and finally the setting or conditions in which that early church found themselves.

A. Peter's title, he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ

1. The title comes from the Greek word (apostalos) which is just transliterated into English as "apostle"

- a. This was simply a title given to a delegated messenger, one sent forth with orders
- b. This was an established office in the church, limited to the 12 apostles and Paul as men specially sent from God to establish the church under the New Covenant

Eph 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

2. As an Apostle Peter had to have the following qualifications:

- a. They had to have seen the Lord and be able to testify of Him and of His resurrection from personal knowledge
- b. They must have been immediately called to that office by Christ Himself
- c. And finally this was to be evidenced by an ability to perform miracles

3. The signs of an apostle were quite evident in the life and ministry of Peter

2 Cor 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

- a. What is said here of Paul was also true regarding Peter
- b. Peter at the gate beautiful spoke to crippled man and he arose leaping and praising God – c.f. Acts 3:4-8
- c. Peter was used of God in raising Dorcas from the dead

4. The Apostles were laying the foundation of the church

- a. The Church was being built upon the foundation the apostles and prophets

*Eph 2:19-21 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*

- b. In 1 Cor 3:10 Paul wrote that he had laid the foundation and reminded the church that the foundation was the Christ
 - c. Thus Peter's epistle is to be received as one with this same authority
5. Peter here is writing to the church with the authority of his apostleship
6. Thus we can safely conclude that Peter was certainly qualified to the title, Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ
- B. The Purpose of this epistle is to instruct the church in the following
- 1. To encourage the church unto steadfastness and perseverance under persecution (1-2:10)
 - 2. To instruct the saints to the practical duties of a holy life (2:11-3:13)
 - 3. Presenting the example of Christ and other motives as directives unto patience and holiness (3:14-4:19)
 - 4. And then concludes with counsels to pastors and to the flock (Ch. 5).
- C. This epistle was written to believers who were in the midst of fierce persecution
- 1. Bit of history that was happening at this time in the church will be helpful
 - a. In A.D. 64 a large part of Rome was burned to the ground
 - (1) Many of the pagans temples were destroyed
 - (2) People believed Nero had purposely set the fire
 - (3) Nero to cover this charge placed the blame on the Christians
 - (4) Because of this the Christian were facing fierce persecution
 - b. These persecutions would sporadically continue up until 313 A.D. when the Edict of Milan would be issued by the Emperors Constantine and Linsinius making Christianity the accepted religion of Rome
 - 2. This then was written to encourage saints of God to live victoriously in the midst of persecution
 - a. To rejoice even in the midst of hostility realizing of what their hope consisted
 - b. God does not always deliver His people from persecution and conflict
 - c. But he does promise to bring them through each trial victoriously

Heb 13:5-6 *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For **He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."** So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

- 3. Peter here is writing to encourage them to keep their eye on the goal before them
 - a. By this means they will give witness before the world to the keeping grace of God
 - b. By this means they will emphasize that the world to come is of greater value than the world that is

CONCLUSION: We do not know the same level of persecution which the early church endured, but what is true for them is still true for us today

The world hates Christianity

Just being a Christian has, throughout the history of the church, been a sufficient cause for being put to death

It may be hard for those of us living in America to fully understand the fierceness of the trial they were about to undergo

But I trust that as we look at this epistle in the next few weeks we will learn from this letter that whatever trial or conflict God may permit His church to go through, we can be assured of this truth: *"that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* (Rom 8:18)

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus