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The Second Epistle of Peter

*Standing Firm on God's
Promises Until Christ Comes
(Pt 3)*

July 23, 2017

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1:1ff

Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 1

2 Peter 1:1-2 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: (2) May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

You will recall that Peter wrote his first letter to the “elect Exiles”:

1 Peter 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus

Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, (2) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

That is an apt description of us, of every true Christian and true Christian church in this present world – *elect exiles*. Remember carefully the warning and encouragement we considered last week:

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Elect exiles are not citizens of this present country, but citizens of another place – a heavenly one. The kingdom of God, the new heavens and new earth. Whenever we find ourselves assailed with hopelessness, we can be assured that we have gotten our eyes off of that which is eternal, that which is our real life, and we are focusing on this perishing and passing-away world.

We know that Peter is now writing this second letter to the same people:

2 Peter 3:1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,

Do you need to be “stirred up” and reminded? Of course you do, and so do I. We are given to very short-term memories when it comes to even the fundamentals of our faith. This is one of the basic reasons why it is so important to gather regularly together in the church and with other believers. Be assured that the devil never rests, is always on the prowl, and bombards us with those “flaming missiles” Paul warns us about.

Ephesians 6:11-16 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against

flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (14) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. (16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

One of the marks of a genuine (sincere mind) Christian is that the Word of God DOES stir up their thinking. If you are a Christian then you know what this is. Perhaps you are discouraged and you start believing the enemy’s lies and hopelessness starts to set in. And then you pick up your Bible or you come to church and you hear God’s truth once again, and your faith and hope are “stirred up.” This also means “to arouse, to wake up.” Our faith, our minds, can tend to grow dull and then along comes God’s Word and the lights come back on. We start seeing clearly and thinking rightly again.

We know who the author is – Simon

Peter. Hebrew and Greek names. The Apostle Peter of the gospels and Acts. The guy who slept instead of praying and the devil got him and he ended up denying Christ 3 times. Here he is, standing firmly now, telling us not to slumber.

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Let's think in some detail here about this "equal standing faith" Peter mentions. That adjective ("isotimos") means "equal in value, of the same kind." It is vital that we understand this. EVERY Christian, from the newest infant in Christ to the oldest has THIS faith. Anyone lacking it is simply not a regenerate person. The faith that you as a Christian have operating in you is the very same faith Peter had, Paul had, and all the rest of the apostles.

This faith therefore *believes and embraces the Apostolic truths set forth for us in Scripture*. This is what John meant when he wrote:

1 John 4:5-6 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God

does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

This is vitally important for us to understand. Our faith is the SAME faith as the Apostles. That means that we embrace the same doctrine as the Apostles. It is why Christians of all ages say "Amen" to the truths of the ancient Apostles' Creed for example:

I believe in God, the Father
almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only
Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy
Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius
Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was
buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again
from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to
judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

When someone who claims to be a Christian, or some entity that claims to be a Christian church refuses to embrace the doctrines of the Apostles, they evidence themselves to be devoid of this “of the same kind” faith!

1 John 4:2-3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

1 John 3:10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 2:26-27 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. (27) But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is

true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

1 John 2:19-20 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. (20) But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

Christians do not agree on every detail. We have differences among ourselves regarding things such as:

- The details of eschatology (order of events surrounding Christ’s second coming, etc)
- The nature of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord’s supper)
- The form of church government (episcopacy, Presbyterian, congregational, etc)

Even these things, one day, will be unified. But because we have all received this faith from Christ which is the same in kind and value as that of the Apostles and even that of Christ Himself, then this faith necessarily unites us in the body of Christ.

How ironic it is then that the Roman Catholic church claims to be ruled by a succession of popes in an unbroken

line from Peter, supposedly the first pope! Because Rome certainly does not evidence the same faith as that of Peter. The righteousness of God that Peter is about to mention in verse 2, for instance, is certainly not embraced by Rome.

In some way that I probably do not yet fully understand, this “of the same kind” faith Peter speaks of is what Jesus must have meant:

Matthew 17:14-20 And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, (15) said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. (16) And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." (17) And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." (18) And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. (19) Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" (20) He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

Understand? It isn't so much a question of "I don't have enough faith," but rather, "do I have true faith at all?" A host of errors and false teaching would be exposed and corrected if Christians clearly understood this subject of "the same kind" faith. Listen to John Brown, a minister in Scotland in the 1800's –

“It is one of the distinguishing characters of Christians, that they are believers – not believers in the abstract, for there is no description more universally applicable to men....but that they are believers of certain statements, which other men do not believe. They count things true, which other men either count false or respecting which they form no judgment about their truth or falsehood; and they believe these things on the testimony of another, which testimony the great body of mankind disregard or discredit.

Let's move on:

by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Notice that here it is quite probable that Peter is directly calling Jesus Christ “God.” Christ is our God and He is our Savior. Of course we, like the Apostles, declare that Jesus Christ is indeed fully God.

But what does Peter mean when he says that it is *by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ* that we have obtained this same-kind faith? Well, if you take your concordance and look up “righteousness” in first and second Peter, you will see that most all the references use the word in the sense of *practical righteousness*. That is to say, holiness of life, obedience to the Lord. If we apply that meaning here, then what Peter is saying is that all Christians owe the possession of their faith *to the righteous obedience of our God and Savior Jesus Christ who, by His righteousness has provided a means by which that righteousness is imputed to us – by faith alone.*

It is by the obedience of Christ to God’s Law and by His obedience to the point of death on the cross that we are justified in other words. By His righteousness we are made righteous. We are regenerated and given this gift of faith. There is NO other way to become a Christian. ALL Christians receive this faith and righteousness in the same manner. No one earns it. No one deserves it. That is to say, *there is no room for boasting.*

Peter continues with his opening benediction:

2 Peter 1:2 May grace and peace be

multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

“Grace and peace” are a very common greeting in the New Testament, as you no doubt know. Here, Peter speaks of his prayer or desire that grace and peace be “multiplied” to these believers. But how can that be? We receive grace when we are justified in Christ and we are set at peace with God in the same way. How can Peter speak of more grace and more peace?

He surely must have in mind *our experience and understanding of the grace and peace we have received in Christ.* That is to say, he desires that we all come to a fuller realization of the grace God has shown us in saving us, and of the reality of the fact that we are now at peace with the God with whom we were once at war. Why is this so vital for the Christian to have a fuller grasp of grace and peace? Because our joy and confidence and hope rests upon us seeing these things more and more clearly. Without a doubt, every single time I become anxious or depressed or unbelieving, it can be traced back to some lack of clarity in my understanding of the grace and peace given me in Christ.

Now, notice that Peter tells us the key to having this understanding of grace and peace “multiplied” to us. Here it is

the day of eternity. Amen.

—
“in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

As we saw two weeks ago, this subject of the “knowledge” of God is a major theme for Peter. It is a major theme in the Scriptures and we have been learning about it in the Sunday School class of late.

The more I know God, the more I will see the beauty of His grace and peace granted me in Christ. Because somehow knowing Him is all bound up in knowing what incredible things He has done for me in Christ.

Isn't it amazing that I can so easily get all pumped up and excited about winning the lottery, buying all kind of stuff with the millions I get, not having to work, and so on, and yet when it comes to grasping the grace and peace which is mine in Christ, I can be so dull? Peter will even end this letter with the same exhortation-

Here is this barrage of lies, of false thoughts that come our way from the world, from the devil, and from our own flesh. I often am contacted by Christians who are really struggling with these kinds of false thoughts and they wonder if God even loves them. Peter says that if you give these things a hearing long enough, you will lose your “stability.”

In contrast though, if we keep increasing in our intimate relationship with Christ, increasing in our knowledge of Him and what He has done for us and given to us, we will grow and we will grow stronger.

Christianity is not about doing religion. It is about knowing Christ, growing in our knowledge of Him, growing closer and closer to Him, seeing Him more clearly for who He really is. That is how you become strong in the Lord.

2 Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. (18) **But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory both now and to