

Sunday June 20th 2010

Petros

Part Two

1). We had begun our study of 1st and 2nd Peter last week by establishing the historical and spiritual context for the writing of these Books.

a). We had remembered how Simon, the brother of Andrew and son of Jonah, had been given the name Peter/Petros, the rock man, by the Lord at their first meeting, recorded in – Joh 1:41 *He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).*

b). And we saw how this giving of the name Peter/Petros prophetically pointed to the type of man of the faith that Simon Peter was to become.

c). We would also not fail to miss the connection that is made in Simon's father's name with the biblical account of the historical Jonah – Just as the historical Jonah had denied God in refusing the commission given to him, so Simon Peter denies the Lord, finding himself, like Jonah in a place that typifies the place of death – Mt 26:75 *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.*

d). Just as Jonah, upon repentance takes the message of God's salvation to the city of Nineveh, so Simon Peter upon being restored by the Lord takes the message of God's salvation to the Jews - Joh 21:17 *He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.*

e). Feeding His sheep is a work that began on the day of Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection, a day when we see Simon Peter for the first time as the rock man and a day also when he makes his first connection with those from the region of Asia to which he sends his two letters - Ac 2:8 *"And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 "Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."*

f). 1Pe 1:1 ¶ *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,.*

2). We also saw the extent of Paul's ministry amongst the believers in the very same region to which Simon Peter sends his letters. We saw how Paul was there for some 3 years and how Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos had also ministered in the same region. This was a ministry so effective that the scripture records in - Ac 19:10 *And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.*

a). Now we did not look at this last week, but it is also interesting for us to see that after being taught personally by the Lord in Arabia for 3 years Paul then travels to Jerusalem to spend 15 days almost exclusively with Peter - Ga 1:15 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

b). And although the scripture does not tell us we can only assume that Paul spent 15 days sharing with Peter the things that the Lord had taught him concerning the 'mystery' – the salvation of the soul in respect of the Gentiles, and their inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom.

c). Not only this, but Peter comments himself on Paul's involvement with those who have been the recipients of his letters - 2Pe 3:15 *and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

3). All in all then we may be well aware of the extent and the thoroughness of the ministry received by those in the region of Asia to whom Peter writes. And it seems in v16 as if Peter has a good knowledge of all Paul's epistles and maybe this would extend to all those in Asia also.

a). There is then one last piece of historical context to set in place this morning before we begin on the letters themselves – It is believed that Peter's first letter was written around AD64 and it is in this year, AD64, that an event takes place that had significant ramifications for the Christian world.

b). It was in this year that a fire broke out in the Circus Maximus in Rome, a fire that burned fiercely for 5 days devastating a large area of the city. Although the Emperor, Nero, was some 33 miles to the south of the city at the time he,

because of the evil he had already done, was accused by the inhabitants of Rome, of starting the fire himself. Faced with a difficult situation he found a scapegoat in the Christians living in Rome and charged them with the crime. What followed was an intense persecution of Christians that would reach throughout the known world and most certainly would have found its way to Asia. Clement of Rome, an early church father, attributes the death and martyrdom of both Paul and Peter to this persecution under Nero.

c). We might remember that it is only 4 years on from this that the Roman legions destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and scatter the Jewish people amongst the Gentile nations, effectively destroying Israel as a national entity – a situation that existed from that time until 1948.

d). And so it is against a background of mature ministry and mature understanding within a context of impending persecution that Simon Peter, under inspiration of the Spirit, puts pen to paper.

4). 1Pe 1:1 ¶ *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 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.*

a). This first letter begins with just the name ‘Peter’, whereas his second letter begins with the name ‘Simon Peter’. The absence of the name Simon here may of itself at the outset of the letter be drawing attention to the steadfastness and immovableness in the faith that Peter intends to encourage in his readers.

b). He is ‘an apostle of Jesus Christ’ – one who has been commissioned on Christ’s behalf to go, taking with him the credentials of the One sending him.

c). And as we have seen the address is *To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*

d). The word ‘pilgrims’ here is translated ‘strangers’ in the KJV and comes from the Greek word – ‘parepidemos’ = an alien alongside, i.e. a resident foreigner:--pilgrim, stranger.

e). Now clearly we are dealing with people whose homes are in the places mentioned, people who may even have been born there and so they are not aliens in that sense. However, when we consider those with a Jewish lineage we can see how they could be seen as resident foreigners.

f). However, given that we are dealing with Christians here who are in pursuit of the Kingdom of the Heavens and remembering what we have studied in - 2Co 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

We would need to understand them as being pilgrims in the same way that the word ‘parepidemos’ is used in - Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having*

received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.

They are pilgrims, aliens alongside, even if they had lived in the same location all their lives, because they are seeking a homeland, a heavenly country that is completely separate from this age.

g). They are also addressed as pilgrims of the Dispersion, and the word ‘dispersion’ comes from the Greek word ‘diaspora’. But this is obviously not speaking of the ‘diaspora’ of AD70 following the destruction of Jerusalem as our letter is written some years before this. And so to understand the intent here we can follow the word ‘diaspora’ to its root –‘diaspeiro’ = to sow throughout, i.e. (figuratively) distribute in foreign lands:--scatter abroad.

h). And I am hoping right now that things will be jumping into our remembrance from the Matthew 13 Parables - Mt 13:24 ¶ *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 "but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way... 38 "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*

i). These Christians then from Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, had been sown into these areas in the region of Asia by the Sower for the purpose of producing the fruit of the Kingdom.

j). And it is right here that we come face to face with ourselves, as should every Christian in every generation reading this letter, for we also are pilgrims in this place, even though it may be the place of our birth, because we are looking for that Heavenly city whose builder and maker is God, consequently this is not our home, and we have been sown into the world, in this location, by the Sower, for the purpose of producing the fruit of the Kingdom and we need to be steadfast and immovable in the faith, like the rock man, governing our lives by nothing more and nothing less than the scriptures, while we wait for the ingathering to our homeland at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

k). And consequently if we took the liberty of personalizing the address at the beginning of Peter’s first letter, it might read like this, ‘To the pilgrims sown in Florida, Texas, California, New York, Nyahururu, Nakuru, Eldoret and Mombasa. And although our physical location doesn’t appear in the original letter, this letter is for us, in our circumstance, at this particular time. Therefore we will need to take seriously what is written there.

5). As we continue in the letter what we find in v2 written about the pilgrims in Asia also applies to us now - *2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,*

a). The word ‘elect’ is the Greek word – ‘eklektos’= to select:--make choice, choose (out), chosen.

b). And this is the same word that we find in what is now a familiar scripture for us - Mt 22:14 *"For many are called, but few are [called out of the ‘called’][‘eklektos] chosen."*

c). And this is exactly the way we should understand the word as it is used here in Peter. They, as us, in pursuit of the Kingdom have been called out from among the called, but this is one of those many principles that we see that have a present application with a future fulfillment. The future fulfillment will of course be at the Judgment Seat when those found faithful will literally be called out from amongst the rest of the eternally saved who have not been found faithful. The very thing that Paul speaks of in - Php 3:10 *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the [out] resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

And so if we should choose now to embrace the fellowship of His sufferings and be conformed to His death and press on in faithful obedience, then being called out from the called, attaining the ‘out resurrection from the dead’, laying hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of us will be an absolute certainty. But it is a matter of our own personal choice, and this is why Peter refers to our ‘election’ in this way in his second letter –2Pe 1:10 *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;*

d). The exhortation here is obviously one of personal choice that we should expend every ounce of effort so as to guarantee our upward calling and being called out of the called. We must make an unyielding effort then to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. And this guarantee is not produced for the purpose of being observed by others, but as a proof to ourselves. So what would this guarantee look like? It would be the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives – Ga 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,23 gentleness, self-control.*

Eph 5:9 *(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),*

e). And our being called out, being the elect, according to our verse in 1 Peter Chapter 1, is by the foreknowledge of God the Father. Now the word foreknowledge, ‘prognosis’ in the Greek, speaks of more than just having a prior knowledge of events, it speaks of a predetermined decision that had been

considered and then made in time past. The idea would be of the Triune Godhead deciding together in counsel that those who would be of the faith would be those who ultimately would be called out of the called in order to receive an inheritance in the 7th Day. The decision was that it would be those who are faithful, who are of the faith, who would inherit the promises, and this would have been decided before the foundation of the world. All that would remain uncertain about this, at least from our perspective, would be who would choose to make that choice to faithful obedience - Ro 4:13 *For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

f). Ac 28:28 *"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"*

6). What we then see in the final part of v2 of 1 Peter Chapter 1 are the two elements that are necessary so as to make our being found amongst the elect by producing the fruit of the Spirit certain - *in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*

a). We firstly see our sanctification, our being made holy, our separation from the things of this world. This is the metamorphosis that Paul speaks of in – Ro 12:1 ¶ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

b). And as we know this is a work of the Spirit within us through the word of God. And it brings us back again to a place we were a couple of weeks ago – 2Co 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

c). The transformation that takes place that takes us from glory to glory goes hand in hand with our journey from faith to faith - Ro 1:17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

d). And our faith cannot be separated from our obedience as we must be doers of the word and not hearers only. Obedience should then be the outcome of our sanctification and the means by which we attain it. And is manifested in the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

e). And secondly we have the ‘sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ’. The imagery here takes us back to the Tabernacle of Moses - Ex 24:8 *And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."*

f). And calls to mind the consecration of the priests for service –
Le 8:30 *Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him; and he consecrated Aaron, his garments, his sons, and the garments of his sons with him.*

g). Now we also, as part of our upward calling, are to be kings and priests –
1Pe 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

h). And it is to the blood of our High Priest in the Heavenly Tabernacle that we go for cleansing - Heb 9:12 *Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?....
.....22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. 23 ¶ Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*

i). And so to pull all this together, our process of sanctification producing in us faithful obedience and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit and our continual cleansing through the precious blood of Christ on the mercy seat in the Heavenly Tabernacle are exactly what must consistently take place for us in order for us to be the ‘elect’ of God within our present situation which would then make certain that we are the ‘elect’ of God in its final fulfillment at the Judgment Seat.

7). And so the opening address of Peter’s first letter is brought to a close with –
Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

a). Now this closure is not just a perfunctory statement of empty words like our common idiom, ‘how are you?’, but is rather to be seen within the context of their dispersion and election and impending persecution.

b). The word ‘grace’ here is the Greek word, ‘charis’, and it is how this word is used later in Peter’s epistle that would give us its meaning here - 1Pe 2:19 *For this is commendable [charis], if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*

c). The ability to do this is entirely dependent upon God as we are empowered through the work of the Spirit to do that which is contrary to our

human nature, freely and willingly. It is an action beyond the ordinary course of action that might be expected and is therefore commendable. This would give us a good definition of the word 'grace/charis' as it is used here.

d). As Peter's readers faced impending persecution possibly requiring martyrdom this is exactly the kind of 'grace' that they needed. And although we are not in a position where our lives are threatened as theirs were we still need the 'grace' that comes from the empowerment of the Spirit so as not to seek to justify ourselves and prove that we are right when we are accused otherwise. Faithful obedience to the word of God in every situation must always supersede the desires of our flesh. This is the 'grace' that Peter asks for them. The grace that we need every day.

e). And along with the grace he asks that peace be multiplied, literally that peace would increase and abound. And the peace he is asking for is obviously not peace with God, but the peace of God – the quietness and the settledness that can only come through trusting God in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

f). It is this kind of peace that Paul writes about in - *Php 4:5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

g). To be able to trust God in this way does not come naturally to us so it is therefore part of the process that we go through towards maturity as through the word, by the transformation of the Spirit, we come to know the faithfulness of God and thereby His trustworthiness. This is exactly the process we see with Abraham and the process that we described earlier today as going from faith to faith.

h). This kind of settled peace is at the very heart of that which Peter writes to wives later in his letter recorded in - *1Pe 3:3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel-- 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.*

i). And a subject he returns to again at the end of this first letter – *1Pe 5:10 ¶ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

8). And so having brought his opening address to a close, an address that, as we have seen, contains so much more than just common pleasantries, Peter now goes on to talk about and to reinforce the reason for the steadfastness and rock solid faith that they and we are to have. And as the Holy Spirit saw fit to make this of paramount importance to the original recipients of Peter's letter, it is something

that we need to take careful note of as well - 1Pe 1:3 ¶ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 ¶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

a). And taking note of this is exactly what we shall do next week, if the Lord is willing.