

Bible Study

Week commencing 13th September 2020

Study One - A great inheritance 1 Peter 1:1 - 2:10

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Prayer

We thank you for this opportunity of joining together in fellowship to read and discuss this letter from your servant Peter, and pray that you will speak to us through his words, and that we might apply the truths we discover to our hearts and lives. Amen.

Comment

Of all the writers in the New Testament, Peter is one for whom we have a lot of background information via the gospels and elsewhere. This first letter, written around AD62-64 has always been a favourite with Christians, who find many familiar phrases used by subsequent writers of liturgies and hymns.

Peter is writing to the believers in Asia Minor (north-western Turkey) and it may be that this is a follow-up to his Pentecost sermon (in Acts 2) where we read that many from that area were converted and baptized. Perhaps these new converts had requested that Peter pay them a visit, from which comes follow-up correspondence.

The letter is not written to individual Churches as with those of Paul, but has a much wider audience, mainly Gentiles, which might explain its subsequent popularity. Peter calls these believers God's elect (a title previously used of Israel alone) and 'strangers in the world'. The literal translation of the first two verses links the Gentile Christians with the 'Diaspora' or 'dispersion' of the Jews scattered during the exile, a title which Peter now uses to describe the Christian Church scattered throughout the known world.

Peter might address his readers as foreigners or strangers, but the over-riding emphasis is that they have come into a new country where they now reside, and have been granted dual citizenship. Not only are they inhabitants of Galatia or Bithynia but they are also citizens of God's new world which is being established and waiting to be fully revealed.

These opening passages remind the reader of the status of a Christian, given 'new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the

dead and into an inheritance that can never fade.’ (1:3,4) and goes on, in typical New Testament fashion to remind them of the bedrock upon which this new life must be built, and that is holiness, encouraged by hope, enforced by the character of God and reinforced by the example and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And the holiness that Peter talks of is not simply spiritual, it can be seen in the way that lives are lived – in service, fellowship, friendship and the love that is shown day by day.

Opening question

Have you ever felt like a stranger in the world, as Peter suggests believers might feel?

Key verse

‘For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.’ (1 Peter 1:23)

Some questions:-

1. Peter is talking to Gentiles but calling them a chosen people (v. 2). What does the word ‘chosen’ mean to you in this context?
2. We’re not only chosen, says Peter, but chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, and the work of the Spirit. How does this fit in with the bigger picture of God and humankind?
3. What would you say is the purpose of the Church?
4. What do vv.10-12 of Chapter 1 tell us about the role of a preacher?
5. Read vv.13-25 of chapter 1, and think about how you might fulfil the instruction (v 16) to ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’ (Leviticus 11:44,45)
6. Peter holds on to his theme of strangers (v.17). How can we be both strangers and playing a full part in society?
7. In Chapter 2:1-3 what is Peter suggesting there is to lose and gain?
8. ‘You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house...’ (2:5). What does this say about the Church?
9. Is a stone more useful as part of a building than lying on its own?

10. How well does the Church reflect the truth of Chapter 2, verse 9?

Something to think about:-

Think about Peter's encouragement that God, in his great mercy, has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:3), and how the word 'living' makes a difference in your spiritual life.

Prayer:-

Pray for those you know who have consistently ignored or rejected the Christian message, that God would speak to them through actions, if not through words.

Some quotes:-

'My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.' (Jack Layton)

'My folks came to U.S. as immigrants, aliens, and became citizens. I was born in Boston, a citizen, went to Hollywood and became an alien.' (Leonard Nimoy)

'Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness' (Desmond Tutu)

'We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

'This City is what it is because our citizens are what they are' (Plato)

'The essential dilemma of my life is between my deep desire to belong and my suspicion of belonging.' (Jhumpa Lahiri)