

Before reading 1 Peter is one of the general letters of the NT. Where Paul wrote to *named* churches, James, Peter and John wrote to Christians scattered over wide areas. From the unexpected order of the areas listed in v1, we guess the letter was delivered by someone who sailed into the Black Sea, landed in Pontus, travelled south through N Galatia and Capadocia, veering West through more of Galatia, then into Asia, and north east to Bythnia, back to a ship on the Black Sea.

Last week we thought about hope from v3, faith in v5, love in v8 and joy in vv6 and 8. We will read again part of last weeks section and concentrate today on vv 10-16 Here's Rob Beck: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Praise to God for a Living Hope

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade— kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

7 These have come so that your faith— of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire— may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,

11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Be Holy

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;

16 for it is written: Be holy, because I am holy.

Sermon starts here

We've reached a truly extraordinary concept in the Bible today. We all know that the Bible is divided into two, the Old Testament, the Jewish scriptures, written before the coming of Jesus, and the New Testament, written after.

So it may be a surprise to you to read 1 Peter 1:10

V10 the prophets (i.e. the writers of the OT) who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, (the non-Jewish Christians in the first Century land we now call Turkey and to us 2 millennia later) searched intently + with greatest care, trying to find out the time and the circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ *in them* was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

Long before Jesus the Christ came in the flesh, the eternal Spirit of Christ was at work in the OT prophets!

I know people who love history and the lessons it can provide. Some of them enjoy the OT as literature. But this says, the OT is about Christ, and the writers knew it, because his Spirit was in them. All this long before Christ came to earth.

We have been moving through the historical books of Samuel, and Kings; it may sometimes have felt like, 'ploughing' through them. We learned about good kings and bad.

In particular, we read Isaiah ch 6, when the prophet was given a dramatic vision; it was the year a good king died, a king who'd reigned over half a century. The temptation was to think, 'oh no, everything is going to go to pieces,' but God had other ideas. Isaiah in a vision saw God filling the Temple in majesty too bright for words. God was still on the throne.

What was he seeing? We tend to assume, God the Father, because this is the OT. But according to Peter, Isaiah was seeing God the Son, the eternal word made flesh.

The call, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' was the voice of Christ, speaking for the Trinity. It was to Christ Isaiah answered, 'Here am I, send me.' And at once Christ showed Isaiah that he would preach and preach, but people would not understand. It was the Spirit of Christ who went on to show that *Isaiah's* suffering as people rejected his teaching was tiny compared to that of the one who was to come, the Servant of the Lord who would be despised and rejected by men.

Yet God would turn the rejection into a means by which God in Christ would bear the penalty of mankind's sin. 'He was pierced for our transgressions.' Isaiah 53:5

Following that suffering in our place, there would be glory for Christ, and glory for all who believed in him, and that would include the Gentiles Isaiah 49:6

Here in Peter's readership were the very Gentiles predicted. They were glorying and rejoicing in the undeserved mercy of God, his grace

IN Isaiah 61, the prophet said, 'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives... to comfort all who mourn, to give them the oil of gladness instead of mourning.

Or Is 65:17 Behold, I will create a new heavens and a new earth. Is this Isaiah's way of talking about the new birth Peter's readers and we have discovered?

Predicting - Suffering for Christ
- Glories for those who believe in him.

You see, Peter is inspired by the *same Holy Spirit* as inspired Isaiah. The difference was, that

Isaiah did not yet know when all this would happen. Peter wrote on the other side of Easter, where we also live. This passage bids us look back at words that include history, and see beyond the mere history, to the work of the Holy Spirit, moving the OT prophets to say more than they could humanly know.

1 Peter 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they spoke of things that have now been told to you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

So recognize that the OT is *inspired*. It does not mean every line tells us how to live. It includes the honest and dispassionate record of a great deal of sin and failure. There are not only examples to follow but errors to avoid.

But through it all, the one author, God the Holy Spirit, is at work doing his favourite job; to take the things of Christ and make them known.

So don't waste your time trying to read the Bible without first praying, asking God's Spirit to continue his work of revealing, uncovering truth.

It's the only way it will make sense; and be sure to take in the broad sweep of it, till you see how each part interlocks with others.

Vance Havner said: You might as well try to catch sunbeams with a fishhook as to lay hold of God's revelation unassisted by the Holy Spirit.

It was revealed to prophets like Isaiah that they were not serving themselves but you.

We move on:

The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring people to holiness. Verse 16 quotes Leviticus 19:2 Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

We cannot do more than start to study this section, but I could not omit it because the work of the Spirit is not to give mere information about God; the Spirit is intent on creating a family likeness.

The letter is addressed to God's elect, the people chosen and called to follow Jesus. We saw last week that coming to faith was a new birth that marked us Christians out as distinct; and in 2:11, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world...

The key element in holiness is being distinct, for God. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it 'holy', i.e. different.

Part of God's holiness involves moral goodness. But that is not where Peter begins:

v13 Prepare your minds for action

the medics tell us the mind is responsible for a massive amount going on in us.

Thousands of brain signals a second keep our lungs breathing, heart pumping, stomach digesting, eyes seeing, ears hearing. The brain is ordering our body to release chemicals that affect our mood.

Amazingly, the way we think can influence the way we feel. The optimist/pessimist divide that sees a glass as half full or half empty carries over into all sorts of things.

If we eat the right food, take enough exercise and think cheerfully, we are more likely to feel happy than sad.

Well, amazingly, Peter tells us that the first part of being holy has to do with the way we

think.

Not the way we *feel*, but *think*.
Prepare your minds for action.

Be self-controlled

Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

AS obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do. For it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy.'

Becoming a Christian involves *justification*, being born again and put right in God's sight. But we are saved for a purpose, and it is to become more like Jesus. To be holy. The moment we believe in Jesus, we are justified. But becoming holy is a process, called *sanctification*.

Jim Packer said: If regeneration is a work of new *creation*, sanctification is a work of new *formation*. If regeneration is new *birth*, sanctification is new *growth*.

'Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks and willing as God wills.' - John Brown

John Blanchard: God is much more concerned about our holiness than about our happiness, much more about our character than our comfort.

CS Lewis How little people know who think that holiness is dull.

Jim Packer again: Many of us would pursue holiness with far greater zeal and eagerness if we were convinced that the way of holiness is the way of life and peace. And this is precisely what it is; there is life and peace no other way.

Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones If you do not desire to be holy, I do not see that you have any right to think that you are a Christian.

He also said, the NT way of handling sanctification is never an appeal, it is a command.

V14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

Be holy, as I am holy, says God.