

Perspective That Counts

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Date: 06 July 2014

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[0 : 0 0] Now, I don't know how many of you will remember anything about a series of sermons that we did a couple of years ago on 1 Peter. Okay, so this is the second letter that Peter has written to the churches.

He also wrote 1 Peter, which is just before this in the Bible. And in 1 Peter, the God or the Holy Spirit gave the message of Peter as an apostle to the church, which is for the church of all time.

But the specific situation was the church at that time was a young church, not necessarily young in age, but young in formation, just grown in the New Testament through the New Testament gospel message.

And they were at a difficult stage. They'd been really good for a while, and then persecution from outside meant that they were struggling. So there was a lot of persecution from the Roman authorities, from the outside.

And people were being persecuted and sometimes even martyred for their faith. So Peter wrote the first letter that he wrote, under inspiration of God, to encourage them to keep going because it was really worth keeping going.

[1 : 1 4] Now, this is 2 Peter, another letter that he writes, but this time the attack isn't from the outside, the attack is from the inside.

So the church is being attacked from within itself. And you know, in many ways, an attack from outside, we can kind of defend ourselves against and it's easy.

But attack from within is always harder, isn't it? It's always more difficult to attack from within your own number, if you're attacked from within.

There's trouble within your own family, or if there's trouble within your own church. And if there's even teaching from within your own church that is contrary to the Bible, then it's a very serious problem.

And so 2 Peter, Peter writes this letter to remind this church again on what basis they were founded and the person Jesus Christ on whom they are founded.

[2 : 1 7] And he says that false teaching is rubbish. It's rubbish teaching. And it's going to absolutely destroy your faith and destroy your Christian life and the blessing that you know from following Jesus.

And he loves them and he cares about them and God cares about them. So God gives this message to remind them of the foundations that they must always stick to.

And that's great. That is really great. The false teachers were coming in and they were saying things like, let's just change the Bible's teaching or change the teaching of the Gospel because it's kind of getting out of date already.

We don't need to live holy lives as either leaders or as Christians because it doesn't matter because grace will save us anyway. Let's just modernize. Let's just live for today and not forget about the future and don't be accountable to Jesus or the fact that Jesus is coming back.

You know, you said He's coming back for ages and He hasn't come back yet. And so they were attacking the very foundational truths of the Bible as they had it and the teaching of the apostles which was authoritative and had come from God for the church.

[3 : 32] So Peter here wants to set out his credentials again, not just his but also the credentials of Jesus.

The theme or the title of the series is Truth Matters. So really this is all about the truth as we believe and understand it being given to us authoritatively in the Bible.

The truth matters and the truth doesn't change. And here it's speaking about the perspective we are to have. And that I think is important for all of us. So I'm going to look at Peter, what he says at the beginning and then I'm going to look at what he says about Christ.

And these are very important for us because we live in days as well when there's a lot of tension within the wider church to reconstitute the Bible, to make it different, to change it, to modernize it, to cut out bits that are no longer applicable or are contradictory to modern understanding and just remold the truth like the Bible's a big lump of plasticine that we can remold ourselves just however society develops.

And so at that level the teaching here never changes for ourselves to remember our foundations and to remember the uniqueness of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[5 : 00] So Peter, Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to those who through his righteousness of our God, Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.

Okay, Peter, my name, my calling, my congregation. Okay, Peter starts by saying Simon Peter. Now we talk with the kids about identity and about names being significant.

Now our names are probably not as significant today as they were in the times of the Bible. A lot more store was put on the meaning of names probably I think then, that's maybe a generalization, but then it is now.

But Peter very deliberately here calls himself Simon Peter. He's a real person. He's a real person with a history.

And kind of the Simon part of his name more or less reminds us of his early days when he was called to be a disciple, when he was a fisherman and he became a follower of Jesus with all his impetuosity and his passion and his zeal.

[6 : 11] You know he's a great guy, Peter, isn't he? Simon Peter as he follows Jesus. So that same Simon is the one that when it really counted denied that he knew Jesus.

Simon Peter often said more than he knew. In that passage we read in Matthew's Gospel he was probably making a declaration about Jesus there that he himself didn't even fully understand.

But sometimes he thought he knew more than he did. Very typical of ourselves in many ways, isn't it? Simon Peter, he's reminding this church partly of his humanity, but also partly of his place and position as a disciple of Jesus.

And he's saying, I was there. There's a certain generation here who will have heard of this comedian probably about 90% of you wouldn't have because of the age demographic here.

But there was a Welsh comedian many years ago called Max Boyce. And his great tagline was, I was there. Because he was a rugby follower and he used to, all his jokes were around rugby, but he always used to say, I was there.

[7 : 22] A great Welsh rugby games and he used to make this a tagline of all his humour that he was there and used to carry a massive big plastic leak.

Probably not very funny these days, but he was quite funny then as I remember. But that's really what Peter said, I was there. I was one of the ones who was with Jesus.

And that was hugely significant because he goes on to speak about his calling, which we'll see in a minute. But now this is Peter as an older man matured in the Christian faith through struggles and difficulties and had become the rock of the church and one of the founding apostles of the church.

And we believe that it was written just very shortly before his martyrdom under Nero, a great brutal Roman leader. But Peter here is reminding his readers of who he is.

He's this transformed man who's been transformed by the power and grace and goodness of God. And his name is significant so is his calling. I'm a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 34] So he doesn't call himself a leader at that level, he calls himself a servant, a title that all believers have, servants of Jesus. But he's an apostle.

He's a sent one. He has a message, he's the kind of New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament prophet. He is the one that has an authoritative, he is an authoritative spokesperson for Jesus Christ and the church is built on the foundation of the prophets and of the apostles' Ephesians 2.20 reminds us that their message was a foundational message.

It doesn't get repeated. It's the same message because it's the message that was given to them because they were sent and it has weight with it. So just because there's a passage of time doesn't make it irrelevant because it's a message that was given by God as part of the gospel for the church.

It's not up for grabs. He's calling, he's setting that in stone, he's saying, this is who I am, this is how I've been called and he then speaks to his congregation.

To those who through the righteousness of God our Saviour have received faith, grace and peace be yours in abundance. So there's not a specifics, not like some of the other letters that are written to specific churches in specific areas.

[9 : 53] But it is to a scattered gathering of Christians, wherever the letter would be taken round and read, probably in modern Turkey. But these people had common characteristics in common with us, in common with us as a congregation of God's people.

They had a shared gift of faith. Okay? Righteousness of Jesus Christ have received, verse 1, have received a faith as precious as ours.

A shared gift of faith that the believers there in different places and throughout history and up into Edinburgh in 2014 have a shared gift of faith.

A shared gift of faith. What do we think faith is? This feeling that we well up within ourselves, I think I've got a great faith and it's something we conjure up ourselves.

Is it something we just simply decide ourselves that I am going to have faith and I'm going to believe and it's my decision? That is not what biblical faith is and it's not what biblical faith is described as.

[11 : 02] It's described as, it's described here as a gift. It's something that they had received, they had taken and been gifted by from God. You know, it's God's gift.

It's not simply something we either have or don't have by act of our will. It's not simply our decision. There's a commonality to every believer.

That's why we love when people come from other churches and holiday here or join with us because as Christians we share a gift together that immediately makes us feel kind of comfortable with one another.

We share a gift that's been given, that is the gift of faith that's common to every believer. And Peter says here, it's just precious. It's no different from the faith Peter had or Paul or any of the great leaders of the church.

We share a gift that we have been given because we have asked, Lord I believe, help my unbelief. I can't believe in my own. I need you to give me faith.

[12 : 03] So that's a great thing, isn't it? We share faith. It's something that's been given that we've asked for and that is a gift from God by His grace. And of course then obviously we have a shared Savior, our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now just for a moment, can you think about this? Just for a moment, who Peter was, Simon Peter, who walked and was a great friend of Jesus, one of the best friends of Jesus, really close to him.

He slept beside him, he ate beside him, he drank beside him, he walked with him. He was a close friend and here is the same Peter saying, our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

So Peter has moved on from knowing Jesus is just a kind of itinerant teacher or an Old Testament prophet to being God at Messiah, linking him with the great promises and the great God of the Old Testament.

Because of Nazareth is this great God, shared Savior who is God, shared faith and also a shared experience, grace and peace, years in abundance through Jesus Christ.

[13 : 17] And that's one of the great experiences that we share, isn't it, as Christians? It's strange if a church where it's full of people that call themselves Christians, they're called the name of Jesus, they call themselves Christians, are either graceless or at war with each other.

That's why churches disintegrate, because it's not simply about our profession and our head knowledge of Jesus, it is that he has gifted us and we experience grace and peace.

So your life and mine should be lives of grace and peace. No matter firstly with God, that broken, peace has broken out with God.

So the troubles you face internally and the sins that you commit and I commit and the opposition that we have towards God is dealt with at the cross, what Jesus has done so that we have a peace has broken out and we have peace with God.

The wall is down. Now that has both vertical and horizontal implications. We believe that we are at peace with God then as Christians we aim and work to live at peace with one another and share that undeserved favour and love of God.

[14 : 34] And it is grace and peace, he says, it's a blessing, be yours in abundance. So he's saying, you know what, torrential rainfall, we don't know much about that in Scotland.

It's just all nice, quiet, wee drizzles. But you know, a real good going, heavy, fat lumps of rain, torrential rainfall. Go and stand under that and just be flooded.

That's the picture of abundance that's given here and stand under that and receive that. It's the opposite to what we would normally advise, isn't it? When it's torrential rain, get under cover.

But no, with this picture I'm saying, no, get right out there. Get under this torrential rain and be soaked by that rain, which is the grace and peace of God in abundance.

How can we know that grace and peace? A very important phrase here. He says it's a grace and peace through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

[15 : 35] Unbelievable statement from Peter. Well, that Peter who walked with Jesus said that the grace and peace of God, the grace and peace is ours through our knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

This is the Lord that we trust and obey. That is what he is saying here, that this Jesus he knew is Lord and God. So how do we know grace and peace spiritually in our lives and with one another?

Grace as we know more of Jesus Christ and follow Him as our Lord. The more we know Him, not just remembering catechisms, but the more we know Him and serve Him and follow Him and worship Him and obey Him and love Him by His own power and grace, then we will know more of His grace and peace in our lives.

So there is a level of conditionality there. And that grace and peace is ours in abundance, but it comes through our knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord.

That means that we need to stand in the torrential rain. We need to stand under His grace. We need to stand in a place where we will get to know Him better and know His abundance.

[17 : 02] If you are struggling today as a Christian, as often we are in our Christian lives and we do not sense His grace, His undeserved mercy, and you do not feel at peace either with God or with one another in our Christian walk, can I just ask the question, where are you standing?

Where are we standing? Are you standing in that place where you will gain that knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord?

A place where we know Him in His Word, know Him in prayer, know Him in fellowship. We do not know, we do not sense grace and peace if we are under the shade or if we are outside of the rain as well.

I am an inverted illustration today, to get into the rain. If we keep ourselves dry spiritually, away from God, away from prayer, away from fellowship, away from His Word, and no one else can do it for you, it is about your own living and a relationship with Him.

That is how we know grace and peace. Peter gives his credentials as an apostle and the importance of what the authority he has as an apostle to present the truth and to give the truth, and the truth that they must not drift from, which the false teachers were encouraging him to do.

[18 : 33] Can I also speak briefly about Christ? I have spent too long on Peter, but can I spend a little about Christ here as well, verses 3 to 5, and just briefly about His divinity, His power and His promises.

I will take just a little time because it is so important. The foundational truths are so important and they drive you back to the place, and drive me back to the place that we have to be.

His divinity of Jesus, we have mentioned that before, that there is this wonderful interchange of titles and names of God or Jesus attributing divinity to Him, you know, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord, His divine power and His divine nature.

So there are all these different titles and descriptions of Christ that remind us of His divinity, divinity which has His own glory and goodness in verse 3.

His divine power is given as everything we need for life and godliness through it by His own glory and goodness. Now, these titles that were used in this early introduction would have been the same titles that people knew about to whom this was written because they were the same titles that were used for Nero, Lord, Savior, God.

[19 : 56] These were all titles that were given to Nero, and so they knew them. And Peter is saying very clearly here, I am pushing you towards martyrdom here because I am saying Nero is not Lord and God and Savior, but Jesus Christ is.

That was really, what is the word for it? I can't think of the word, but it was very dangerous teaching to teach like that.

It was, no, it is on the edge of my tongue, but I can't, it is subversive, that is the word I am looking for. It was subversive teaching to say that Jesus Christ, this crucified Jew was on the same level as Nero, and yet He was, but He is giving the alternative, it is Jesus' glory and goodness.

And whatever Nero was, he certainly wasn't glorious and he absolutely wasn't good. And he is the usurper, but Jesus is divine and He is the weight of the Old Testament God and that glory as well as the New Testament revelation of His sheer goodness.

So that is Christians. One of the things that motivates us, or ought to motivate us, is the goodness and the beauty of Jesus. That is why we love Him, that is why we serve Him.

[21 : 16] It is not that we are driven there, it is not that we feel we ought to be there, but His divinity is a good and gracious one and one that we love and is compelling and attractive.

And sometimes I think we lose that, don't we? We lose that. But it is the paradox of it all, isn't it, that this glory and goodness, and its most glory and its most goodness is revealed on a cross.

I mean how insulting would that be for Nero? To be told that this Jew who was crucified on a cross was the one who had greater love than no one, who laid down his life for his friends.

And you see that is the foundational truth about the divinity of Jesus, that you can manipulate, that you can't change and that you can't abuse. And it's the truth that Peter was wanting to make clear before he goes on to expose the false teaching of those who were modernists or whatever else they were.

Christ, His divinity, had His own glory and of goodness and He is the God who we know has called us. So it's divinity, but then there's His powers mentioned here.

[22 : 34] His divine power inversely has given us everything we need for life and godliness. As some statement, because very often I think our question of God is that you don't have power God, you certainly don't have power in our lives.

Because we feel He's not answering our needs and He's not giving us what we want so that we feel He's powerless. I think what's very important to remember is that, is the time in which He's called us for a start.

We are in between times. We're in between times between His first coming and His second coming. And there are times when we have to live in a world that is corrupted and corruptible of which we're apart.

But we've been saved from by grace. But the power for us is in this tension of living in the already, but the not yet. We're not in heaven yet. Some people believe we're in heaven now and so everything should be great and rosy.

Other people think, well, and that God should just give us all that we want. Other people think, well, God is not powerful anymore. But the Bible makes clear we're living in in between times. Already we've received many promises, but there's lots of promises that have not yet been fulfilled and will be fulfilled.

[23 : 59] But He gives us the power and everything we need for godliness. That is for observable holiness.

The false teachers are saying, it doesn't matter how you live, you can live any old way and you can sin with impunity. Because, well, Jesus died for you anyway. But Peter saying here, no, we're called to live a godly life.

That is observable holiness. And verses 5 to 9 that we'll look at next week hopefully, unpacks some of that for us. So there's this sense in which He's called us and He has given us all we need, everything we need for godliness.

What do you see? What? Enough grace. Everything. Wisdom. Everything. Patience. Everything. Insight. Everything. Self-control.

Everything. Perseverance. Everything. All you need to live in this life, which is a struggle and a battle. Everything you need to be a Christian and to stay a Christian. Have you come to church sometimes and thought, I don't think I can go on doing this?

[25 : 05] Or have you got up in the morning and thought, I don't know if I can carry on being a Christian. It's such a battle, it's such a struggle. It's so difficult. Good. Because that's the way it is.

But He says, I've given you everything you need to help you to survive this battle. He doesn't give us an escape from it, but He says, I give you everything that you need. He's called us.

And how do we get this everything? How? Well, again, it's the same word He uses, knowledge.

He says, you've everything what? Through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory. It's the same as verse 2, through the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ. You see the links?

See what He's going back to all the time? He's saying that we have everything we need through Jesus Christ. He says we have grace and peace through our knowledge of Jesus Christ. He's going back to this channel all the time.

[26 : 01] You know, I can't graduate beyond that. And you can't graduate and you're Christian life's beyond that either. We don't look for flash new teachings that says, well, can we not do it another way?

Can we not go another way and find an easier way? No, He says it's through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And that is hugely significant. There's a channel for His power, just as there's a channel for His grace and for His peace.

It's through knowing Him, depending on Him, trusting on Him, opening up the Bible in our lives, reading about Him, praying His Word into our lives, praying to Him, being in relationship with Him simply.

So that when we're in relationship with someone, we're talking with them, we're trusting them, we're following them. And I know it's different because it's spiritual, but nonetheless it's the same.

Power. Power in trials, power in suffering, power in this corrupt world, power to battle against our own hearts, power to see miracles.

[27 : 04] Christ has divinity, His power, and also lastly, very briefly, His promises. So as divine power is given as everything we need in verse 4 through these, He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires.

Astonishing verse again, with which to finish. Now the whole Bible is predicated on promises of God, some that have been fulfilled, some that have still to be fulfilled.

But there's, I don't think there's a promise that comes bigger than this one here, in this verse that says, through these promises, we will participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of this world.

Could I paraphrase that very briefly and see if you recognise what I'm paraphrasing it from? You can become like God's. Where's that from?

That's from the very beginning of the Bible, isn't it? It's from Genesis. Where Satan tempted Adam and Eve by us, by tempting them to disassociate with God and say, if you do what I say, you will become like God.

[28 : 23] And it was, it's the absolute greatest lie of all, it's the most brilliant lie of all times. What he said was, if you disassociate from God, you'll become like God.

You'll become God's, basically, he says to them. And it was a complete inversion of the truth because what the Gospel says and what Jesus says is, if you trust in Jesus by re-association with God through Jesus Christ, you will share in the divine nature.

So God has this amazing promise for us that Satan tempted Adam and Eve to grasp the wrong way by rebelling against God and going their own way, sticking their fingers up at God and going their own way.

And what we have in Jesus Christ is the absolute promise that we become, as believers, participants in the divine nature.

We have a renewed image of God. We have the Holy Spirit in dwelling us. We become children of God. We have the life of God. We have trinity and fellowship and company and everlasting life from God.

[29 : 31] And so we participate in the divine nature. That means we never, we never die. Physically yes, most of us will, unless Jesus comes back first.

But spiritually we never die. Even though we die yet we shall live. Because we are participants in this great divine nature of the God who, you know, who never dies and who was never born and who always is.

And who is life and we share in that through Jesus Christ. And we escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

You know, sometimes Christians have been wrongly accused of escapism. And you know, we're not escaping reality.

But there is a sense in which through Christ we escape death. And we escape the sting of death. And we escape the corruption of our own hearts.

[30 : 39] And we escape the corruption of the world in which we live. And we escape the wrath of God. And we escape into a place where evil will no longer be.

That's an astonishing reality. None of us can live and imagine a world without evil. You know, every day we live, every day we wake up, not only do we battle with our own selfish, evil, wretched, greedy, self-centered hearts.

But we wake up to bad news, don't we? We wake up to inexplicable evil. Irrational evil.

Evil that is just mind-blowing. That society wants just to sweep under the carpet and just have a party all the time. But the reality is it's there.

And there's many people living today who are living just with the fear of death and the fear of oppression and the fear of being ripped apart. And the fear of being burnt alive.

[31 : 46] And the fear of being just annihilated. You know, we live in our own comfortable Western society. And generally, we maybe don't feel that evil is quite so tangible and close to us.

But for many, many people it is an absolutely tangible reality. And if we only open our eyes, we'll see it every moment in our own hearts and in the streets in which we live.

And we escape that as we put our trust in the one who is given us his amazing promises and share that with others.

So the gospel is unchanging. And though I get taken, I hope never, to the jail or to the cross, I can never say that there's any other gospel.

Whatever other people might say. Because this is the gospel that time doesn't make any difference to its truth. It remains absolutely relevant and absolutely true in the foundation of our lives and of our hope and of our future and of death being defeated.

[32 : 55] So we seek to live it. And we seek forgiveness when we don't live it. And when we are ashamed of it. And when we try and change it and adapt it to suit our own needs.

Maybe that we, like Peter, he is teaching this church of the important foundations that are ours and must remain ours in our Christian lives.

And the only foundation, if you're not a Christian, it's the only foundation that you will ever know grace and peace. Peace in your own heart.

Peace from running. And peace from guilt. Because it's a peace that comes from our judge and our Saviour.

And so it's an absolute peace. Let's bow our heads and pray. Father God, we ask and pray that you'd help us to know the gospel and live the gospel.

[33 : 52] Forgive us when we are ashamed of it. Forgive us when we think it's embarrassing or when we think it's irrelevant. Forgive us when we keep it in our back pockets or when we believe it nicely in our heads is some kind of spiritual insurance policy.

But when we fail to live it out in a Christian church, when we are graceless or when we are divisive or angry and divided from one another without seeking reconciliation and peace.

Forgive us because we know Lord that that is often so destructive and is exactly the issue that Peter was addressing here.

There's that opposition from within. And may we see and know that that is from the very beginning that has been Satan's tactic, his internal disruption.

And may we be precious about trusting in you and about coming to you for the gift of faith and standing under the torrential reign of your grace and of your peace and seeking in our day to day living on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday and on Saturday that we will be in touch with you through prayer and through the word and through a life of spirit filled obedience.

[35 : 20] So help us in these things. Lord God, we pray and ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.