

Friday: Concealed in a closing...

Read: 1 Peter 5:12-14 ¹² By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. ¹³ She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. ¹⁴ Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Reflect:
This sounds like such an innocent closing. If we're not careful we run the risk of missing so much. We've already touched on who Silvanus and Mark were. Yet we must not overlook "she who is at Babylon..." This is a reference to the church in Rome. This is interesting because Christians in Rome were beginning to suffer, and would continue to suffer, greatly...

We also have the statement of "this is the true grace of God." The "this" should be understood as the whole letter. But what is more important is the command to "Stand firm in it". Grace calls for a response...

The call to greet one another with a kiss of love is interesting. We cast it off as "cultural," so we don't do it. Yet in doing so we run the risk of missing a profound point. A kiss was not for members of a club, but for family. Christians are to be a tight-knit group. Also, the reminder of being "family" would likely help to heal any wounds opened by this letter (i.e., we're there for each other).

Respond:
Are you aware of the persecution of the church at large? Visit www.persecution.com to learn more.

How can you "stand firm" for the grace of God today?

Gestures aside, how can we relay the affection/acceptance intended by Peter?

Pray: Pray for your ability to "stand firm" in God's grace – pray for another believer's ability as well. Pray for Cookson Hills, one of the missions New Life supports. Pray for God's blessing on our upcoming service at Timmerman Elementary in Emporia on Sunday. Pray for your ability to resist temptation(s).

Saturday: Oh What's in Store for Us...

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-12 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while...

Reflect:
1 Peter contains, like virtually every Pauline letter, a "Thanksgiving" section. These verses (although vs10-12 are a bit of a parenthesis) are it for Peter. Contained within this section of letters in the Bible, a person will find the main contents of the letter that will be focused on in more detail throughout the body.

I'm sure you noticed the Trinity showed up in 1 Peter 1:1-2 from last week. Guess what? The Trinity is in these verses again. Throughout this letter we will read words from a man whose mind was saturated with Scripture.

You could say that the basic message of these verses is, "Your salvation is **spectacular**!! However, you are going to temporarily suffer...but don't lose sight of Jesus..." It's a message we need to hear today as well.

Respond:
What can you do today to prepare yourself for worship at the building tomorrow?

Have you read through 1 Peter in one sitting yet? Why not make it a regular thing to do throughout this sermon series? Perhaps Saturday could be a day to do it.

Have you made plans to join others from New Life for prayer and service to our community tomorrow evening?

Pray: Pray for those God is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow to be obedient and come. Pray that what we do tomorrow is pleasing to God and that lives will be positively impacted by the interactions we have, the singing, preaching, and teaching...pray for a God-honoring day. Thank God for your salvation.

An Ancient Letter...A Modern Message

October 5 – 11

The letter of 1 Peter was written somewhere around AD 64. That's 1,944 years ago. Have you ever stopped to question why we spend so much time looking at ancient documents?

Granted, as Christians we believe the Bible to be God's Word – no matter what century it is. But, how relevant can a nearly 2,000 year old letter be for us today? Have the daily life circumstances of people not changed in that span of time?

My hope is that over the next several weeks we'll see it is very relevant for us. In fact, it may be painfully relevant for us at times. I pray you don't mind. I don't. In fact, I'll let you in on a little secret. When I read and study the Bible parts of it offend me, cut into my conscience, convict me of wrongs, etc, etc, etc. Perhaps during the course of this series you'll feel some of my pain...

Please understand, my goal is not to maliciously inflict pain on anyone. My goal is to continue us all on the path of maturity in the Christian life. This will result in making God famous by bringing Him more of the glory He deserves. I really believe that is your goal as well.

Two weeks ago now this sermon series, "Living Lives that Prompt Questions," began. The sermon that week was basically on the name YHWH (LORD in English Bibles). You may recall that I spent time that week talking about how YHWH is based on a verb...and that God is an "active God". In light of that, we ought to be known by what we do as well. As I said at the end of the sermon, when people hear about New Life Christian Church they'll say, "Those people at New Life, they are ____ ..." What goes in that blank is up to us. We need to be sure we are portraying God accurately to those around us.

Last week Larry did a wonderful job preaching from 1 Corinthians. Although it was a 'fill in' and not really a part of the series, I'm sure you will see how it fits very nicely into where we're headed. Larry talked about living a worthy life and steps to take to assist in that goal/calling. Rolling that back to the prior week we can see how seeking to live a worthy life will help people put God-honoring descriptors in the blank phrase above.

There is no doubt about it. When we serve the "I Am" (i.e., YHWH) we are noticed. In a culture looking for direction and hope will they find it when they look at us? In a culture set on self-satisfaction and personal gain will they be convicted of their wrongs when they look at us? The answer to these, and other questions, is how and why 1 Peter is relevant for us today as well.

Monday: *Hey, it's Peter...*

Read: 1 Peter 1:1a ¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those...

Reflect:

The name, Peter, is a familiar one. For those who are somewhat familiar with the Bible they know he was a disciple of Jesus. Yet how much do we really know about him? Since he was one of the original disciples who became an apostle, why don't we have more of his writings? Did he not have as much "good stuff" to say as Paul?

In each gospel Peter is among the first disciples called by Jesus (Mt4:18-19; Mk1:16-17; Lk5:1-11; Jn1:35-42). Throughout the gospels Peter appears to be the "spokesman" for the group (e.g., Mt16:13f; 17:4; Jn6:68-69). This image continues into the beginning of Acts (e.g., Acts2:14ff). Yet it's interesting to note how Peter is portrayed differently by different authors of the New Testament. Luke has a very positive view of him (e.g., no rebuke for Messiah presuppositions in Lk9:20-22; his prominence in the beginning of Acts), while Mark has a different focus (e.g., the rebuke after the Messiah confession in Mk8:27-33; the editorial comment in Mk9:6; etc.). Why? Perhaps it's because Mark's gospel has Peter as its source.

So, what do we really know about Peter? In ways, quit a bit, and it seems we can at least deduce he was a devoted follower of Jesus who didn't use his "status" to order others around. **However**, he would appeal to God's revelation in order to instruct others how to live.

Respond:

Why do you think we don't have more of Peter's writings? Do you see any irony in this?

Did you know Peter was likely the only disciple of Jesus who was (at least initially) married (Lk4:38)? This (being older) likely accounts for his outspokenness.

What can we learn from Peter in the way of humility (cf. 1Pet5:1,12)?

Pray: Thank God that His Word continues to speak to us today. Thank God for the many examples of humility (e.g., Peter) that His Word has preserved through the centuries for the instruction of His people. Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: *...with some help from my friends*

Read: 1 Peter 1:1a ¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those... **1 Peter 5:12-13** ¹² By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you... ¹³ and so does Mark, my son...

Reflect:

It's interesting to note that as important and prominent as Peter was (remember, he was even re-commissioned by Jesus – cf. Jn21:15f), he isn't above needing help...

So, a question arises, who is Silvanus? The name "Silvanus" appears only four times in the Bible (2Cor1:19; 1Thess1:1; 2Thess1:1; here), but his Hebrew name, "Silas," appears many more. Using both names we can see a fuller picture of an important figure in the early church. He helped carry a letter of extreme importance during a theological crisis because he was a "leading man" (Acts15:22). He was also a prophet (Acts15:32) who helped serve with Paul (Acts15:40) and was a Roman citizen (Acts16:19,25, esp.37).

And Mark? Well, he was an instrumental part in the breakup of the Barnabas and Paul missionary team (cf. Acts15:36-41). However, tradition states that he is also the author of the Gospel of Mark, having used Peter as his main source. Oh yes, and things were set right between him and Paul (2Tim4:11).

Respond:

"By Silvanus" means that Silvanus either 1) helped write the letter, 2) delivered it, or 3) perhaps both. This may not seem that important, but a 'letter carrier' was also expected to expound on the contents of the letter. Can we expound on the contents of the Bible we carry?

Is there someone you've 'wrote off' for ministry purposes who may in fact accomplish great things for God's kingdom?

Have you read through 1 Peter in one sitting yet?

Pray: Thank God that He equips all believers for service in the church. Pray for the Unity and purity of New Life. Pray for our upcoming service (10/12) to a school in Emporia. Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: *Background...*

Read: 1 Peter 1:1-2 ¹ 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.

Reflect:

Peter wrote to Christians in specific geographic locations. The specificity of this opening should give us pause. Before we apply it to ourselves today we must find out how it impacted them first. This premise goes for the entire Bible.

Unfortunately, we don't know as much as we'd like to about these places to which he wrote. Yet, that doesn't mean we don't know anything. People from these regions were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts2:9). Perhaps that is why Paul was forbidden by the Spirit to go to Bithynia (Acts16:7). I.e., there was already some form of a "church" there. We also know that Christians in these areas were facing sporadic persecution (e.g., the letters from Sunday).

Yet for what we don't know about this letter's opening (i.e., more specifics about the places...e.g., it appears Peter hadn't been there because the letter isn't overwhelmingly personal), it is amazing how we think we know so much about the "theologically loaded" terms in these first two verses...

Pray: Thank God that His word will speak just as loudly to Christians 1,000 years from now (if Jesus hasn't returned) as it does to us today. Pray for Bob Griffin, Larry Hayes, and Roy Andrews; New Life's elders. Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Respond:

When you read the Bible do you look for a word for you today...or do you look for the eternal Word of God for everyone and then apply it to your life?

Consider shooting me an e-mail about your questions as you work your own way through 1 Peter (tnerb7@yahoo.com).

What do you do with these "theologically loaded" words?

Thursday: *Fightin' Words...or Distractions?*

Read: 1 Peter 1:1-2 ¹ 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.

Reflect:

Sadly it seems the "theologically loaded" words here (e.g., "elect," "foreknowledge") are "fightin' words" for many in Christianity. My question (well one of them) is, was that Peter's intention?

Did Peter intend to set off theological sparring matches between those with differing viewpoints on God's sovereignty (if there were differing views then)? Or, did he intend to bring comfort to those addressed in this letter?

Let me be "clear" for a moment. Does the Spirit sanctify us? Yes. Do we have any choice in the matter? Yes (cf. 1Thess5:19; Eph4:30). Are those facts in opposition to each other? No. Example after example abound in Scripture to support each of the above questions. I'll leave all of that stuff aside for now. More productive questions are ones like "How does my life show obedience to Jesus?" or "Do my daily decisions reflect that I'm in a covenant relationship with God?" Don't you think?

Respond:

Have you spent more of your time in "theological debates" rather than serving others? Does that concern you?

An "exile" is a person who has no intent of establishing themselves in a specific location – their home is elsewhere. Do you long for your home in heaven? Or are you "comfortable" on earth?

Pray: Thank God for the privilege of being "elect" – pray your life reflects that status. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag; deacons of New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.