

1 Peter 1:5-7 'Our Shield, Hope And Glory!'

Last time we looked at 1 Peter 1:3-4 in a sermon entitled 'The Trinity and our Hope'. We looked at 2 main points. Firstly, I explained that though it was not Peter's main intention, hidden in v3, we actually have his second declaration of the doctrine of the Trinity. V2: "Chosen by the foreknowledge of God, through the sanctifying of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ." Yes Father, Son and Spirit. Then in v3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and we looked at who was present at Jesus' conception. Luke 1:3-5 "the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one born to you will be called the Son of God." Yes Father Spirit and Son. As the ancient Creed says: Indivisible. Not able to be divided! John 10:30: "Jesus said, "I and the father are one." One before the universe began. One at creation. One at the God-Man's conception. One at Jesus' birth. 3 persons in one God!

My reason for making that point was because sound biblical doctrine is the very foundation upon which all that Christians cling to, is built! Many are casting aside sound biblical teaching today. But such reckless actions are an abyss, from which very few escape. Lest it be by God's mercy!

We also saw that God's "mercy is great." That He is "long suffering." That He is "compassionate." That He is lenient to those who are guilty of the crimes of sin and rebellion. That He is ever ready to forgive those who come to Him in repentance. That we have "new birth." We are new creatures. Born again. And born "into a living hope." Our hope is "living" because Jesus lives! No our "hope" is not dead, because Jesus lives! And our heavenly inheritance is eternally "kept" guarded, by Him. V4 "it can never perish, spoil or fade."

And that's where we pick up the letter this morning. 1 Peter 1:5-7: 'Our Shield, Faith and Glory!'

V5 "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." Friends, notice that Peter writes "who through faith are shielded by God's power." Thus far, why has Peter spoken with such words of encouragement? He has spoken of "God's choosing" more than once. He has spoken of the Trinity, also more than once. He has spoken of "the living hope" that we have in Jesus. And he has spoken about our "eternal inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade." Why has he spoken with such profound words of assurance to the recipients of this letter? And now he speaks of them even being "shielded by God's power." Why is he using these terms? It is because the days were deadly! You only need a "shield" if you are in a battle. And you only needed to be "shielded", (protected by another), if the enemy were all around.

That was reality for the believer in those days. It was not the walk in the park which is offered by many in Christ's Name today. Falsely may I add. The life for the believer faced enemies on all fronts. If they were Jews, they in effect turned their back on family, faith and society. And if they were non-Jews, they turned their back on their Idol worship, which in many cases meant an end to their financial security. And also for the non-Jew, like the Jew, it meant great upheaval in family and society! In both cases, it meant the beginning of their new life. Born again! It was not without reason did Jesus say in Matthew 16:20-24 "If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what would it profit a man if he again the whole world? Yet forfeits his soul? And what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his father's glory with his holy Angels and he will reward each person according to what he has done."

No, it was not without reason that Jesus pointed them toward the reality of the cross. Because Beloved, this was not merely a social ostracising. The physical danger was all too real. Christians were literally placed on poles, (some even impaled), covered in pitch and then set on fire to light the

way into the Colosseum. They were used as sport for lions to tear apart to the cheers of the Roman people. They were boiled in oil. They were beheaded, they were tortured in the most horrendous ways to get them to recant their faith. And friends, in many places around the world today it is no different today. We hear nothing of it in the secular media, but Christians are being put to death in the hundreds of thousands around the world every year! And in our own country every (as I have mentioned many times) our Judeo-Christian heritage is being eroded at such a pace and in such a way, (that if it hasn't happened already), then soon, we will be strangers even aliens, in our own homeland!

So Peter's goal Brethren, was to encourage them and to strengthen them in their faith, because trouble and danger was everywhere. He tells them that, though the enemy is on all sides, they are "shielded by God's power." Having encouraged them to set their sights on their heavenly inheritance v4, it would be of no benefit to them if they were not assured of finishing that journey so that they could receive the reward! So again, he reassures them that "God's power" is protecting them. Yes God is in effect carrying them in the palm of His hand!

Exodus 19:3-4 "then Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob, and what you are to tell the people of Israel. You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself." Isaiah 40:21-35 we read: "Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to nought and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, then He blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens, who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you say, oh Jacob, and complain, oh Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is disregarded by my God? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Yes Beloved, we are "shielded by God's power." He not only holds out heaven to us, but He carries us as though on eagles wings through the Cross of Jesus, (even His Own Son), and to bring us to Himself. Praise God!! And friends notice also that it is "through faith are we shielded by God's power."

Now Matthew Henry explains that "faith" is God's sovereign preservative. So through "faith we are shielded" and preserved by God. Remember the shield is evidence that we are in the battle. We may be wounded along the way. Peter makes no promises. Many veterans have plenty of battle scars. Bullet wounds. Limbs missing. Tremendous traumas they've experienced in the war. But "God's power" through Jesus will take us home. And he has given us that eternal preservative called "faith" to do battle, while we remain in these bodies of flesh in this life!

But brothers and sisters, let me qualify that word "faith." It is a word that has interestingly come up often while I've been talking to and seeking to witness to one of my friends. You know it's interesting, that pagans will often use the word "faith." My friend came to me some time ago needing to talk. Saying that he was at a crossroads in his life. Having lost the ability to do his job and surf, two things which he dearly loved. He had applied for a job and providentially, he ended up

getting that job. When he told me, I said Praise God. That's a real answer to prayer. And his words to me were, "I believed it would all workout because I had "faith." Now just let me say that he wasn't that confident when we talked previously about the situation. Anyway, I asked him the question: What he meant by faith? And his reply was, (as many people's would be), that it would all workout for the good in the end. You know, if you put enough good out there into the cosmos, it will eventually find its way back to you somehow and even extra-terrestrially, bring that good back to you when you are in a bad situation! Now what James didn't realise, sadly, was that he was basically saying what many Christians believe. And that is, that they are in effect earning their salvation. Because if we break this down, what we are saying is that it is the quantity of "faith", that we possess, (in whatever that thing may be), yes the quantity of "faith" that we possess will win us the prize in the end. And of course for the Christian, that prize is eternal life!

But the problems with this thinking are: What if I don't have enough "faith" to make it to the end? And how do I know if I do have enough faith? Yes what if I'm someone who is constantly stumbling and failing? Screwing up, time and time and time again? There are even those who will tell us that the reason that we are sick or suffering or struggling, is because we don't have enough "faith" Where does that leave me? Beloved, the problem with this worldly view of "faith" is that it all relies upon us. Yes it's how much faith do we possess! You hear people say things like, I knew I'd get through it because I have my "faith." Or, I knew we could do it if we just had enough "faith." Or as my good friend said, "I knew it would work out well, because I had "faith."

But friends here's the thing: Jesus said, "if you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to the mountain, get up and move and it will." Now firstly, a mustard seed is so small you can barely see it. And Secondly, Jesus wasn't speaking literally, He was speaking metaphorically. He was saying that if we pray concerning someone circumstances, whatever they may be, then that mountain of a situation which they are facing can be moved by our prayers of "faith." So if that is the case, that we faith the size of a mustard seed we can move mountains, then surely the amount of our faith has nothing to do with it.

Then what is the secret here? Well before I answer, again, when I was speaking to my friend, I asked him if he'd like me to pray for him. He said, "I don't mind Roy, I pray all the time". And I asked, "Really? What do you mean? And how do you pray? He said, "When I see someone who is in need, I pray into them". He was basically saying that he was sending his good thoughts and wishes out to them. Then I ended up saying, "That's all good, and I appreciate the sentiment mate, but the problem with that is: what is it going to achieve? It's not going to change anything!"

You hear these sorts of garbage in the media all the time when some crisis or other is occurring. Our prayers, thoughts and wishes are with you. We are sending our good thoughts out to you. All that stuff does is make those who say such things feel better. While also making everyone out there in TV land feel better about themselves! But I explained to my friend, that the difference between that sort of stuff and what Christians do, is that Christians pray to the God who created the universe and everything in it. And that He and He alone can effect change, in anyone's life!

Brothers and Sisters, I do hope you understand why I have taken this route to get us to this point. The prayers that "availeth much" with God, the Bible tells us, are not in the power of the one who is praying, but in that One, to whom they pray. And in the same way, it is not the amount of faith which we possess, but that One, in whom we have our "faith," that matters. That is why Jesus said that a tiny amount of faith can move mountains in people's lives. Even move them for eternity. So it's not the amount of "faith" which we have, but the power of the One in whom we have that "faith"!

So friends, that excludes none of us. There should be no reason why we don't pray alone, and also gather together to pray. Because those prayers are a reflection of our faith! With our prayers we confess that we are not in control. In "faith" we pray, trusting and believing that God will answer our

prayers. All of our prayers. But only as He sees fit, and in accordance with His Plan and Will. Paul prayed three times that God would “take away his thorn in the flesh”, that physical infirmity, whatever that thing was. But God's answer to him was “My grace is sufficient for you.” Even Jesus Himself prayed three times in the garden of Gethsemane, “Father if it's possible, take this cup from me. Yet not my will but thine be done.” So we must always leave the answer to our prayers in God's hands. He is the one who has determined His Plan and Will for people's lives. Not us. As hard as it is to accept at times! Yes we are “through faith shielded by God's power until the coming of the Salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” Or in other words, these things will be made complete when Jesus returns to fulfil all things! Our Salvation, that day we were born again. Our sanctification, God chipping away at the old person day by day from within. And our glorification, when we are taken up to be with Father Son and Holy Spirit, for all eternity. Hallelujah. Come Lord Jesus come! V6 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”

Can you see that here, Peter looks back to all that he is already stated, for us to see where does the “joy” for the true believer lies? V1-5 give us our reasons for “joy” in the midst of all hardship. “Chosen by God;” “In His great mercy;” Our “new birth;” Our “living hope,” because Christ is risen. Our eternal “inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade kept. For us by Jesus” “Through faith, shielded by God's power.” Until everything is fulfilled and Jesus is revealed! Peter keeps getting us to look up, doesn't he. And again, with good reason. Because the dangers and trials were all too real. In those heaven realities belongs our “joy,” And we “rejoice” because we know that this life is only for a season. Peter even speaks of this life and the sufferings of the believer, (while not wanting to make light of those murderous realities by any means), and yet he speak of them as being only “for a little while.” Yes, “for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” Brethren, for some of you, I know in part, the long journey that you have been on with Jesus. Some of lost loved ones. Marriage partners, and breakups. Psychological struggles. Physical ailments and trials. Estranged from family and friends. Even heartaches and damage inflicted upon you by those who claimed Jesus!

Yes Beloved, I know in part your hardships in Christ's Name, but there is One who knows in full! 1 Corinthians 13:12 “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, then shall I know fully, even as I am fully known.” Yes there is One who knows you fully. All of those trials through which you struggled, (and there may well be more ahead, again, Peter makes no promises), but yes all of those trials through which you've battled and may continue to do so, Peter calls them all “for a little while.” So we must look to that which awaits us.

Yes the road ahead may be hard. It most likely will be in some ways, but what awaits us, yes the prize that awaits us through that door of death, we cannot even begin to imagine! “Who can fathom the mind of God” the scripture says. And also 1 Corinthians 2:9 “However it is written, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no min conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.” Again, he doesn't make light of our hardships dear friends, and yet in the scheme of eternity they are but “for a little while.” Yes perhaps, grief through all kinds of trials, and yet always we must keep our eyes upon the prize! And Beloved, notice that those hardships sufferings griefs and trials, which have been sent by God, (and through which by His Grace you have persevered), have not been for nothing!

Almighty God does not allow His children to suffer for no reason friends. Jesus didn't suffer and die without purpose. It was all part of the Father's plan of buying back His children. In like manner, our own trials, sufferings and griefs have a purpose. V7 “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.”

What Peter does first here is compare our “faith” to gold. That our “faith”, is of greater value than gold. Now gold is tested twice. Firstly, all of the dross and impurities are burned away. And secondly, to determine the purity of that gold. Yes refined through the fire and then tested for its purity. Is it 9, 18, or 24 carat?

And yet even gold, Peter explains, will one day perish. But not the faith of those who trust in Jesus! Yes he explains that our faith also is refined through the fires of testings and trials, because it also is being purified. Through those hardships, the genuineness of our faith is being revealed.

Are we genuine? Yes are we the real deal? Are we those who will stay the course till the end? Or will we be burned away with those impurities of dross, sand and dirt? And the purpose of all of those testings dear friends is that when Jesus appears, (with Him), “praise, glory and honour” will be ours!

Yes Beloved, we are being prepared to spend an eternity with God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And the unimaginable wonders of heaven, that God has prepared for us!! Hallelujah we cry. Come Lord Jesus Come!!

Let`s Pray!