

2 Peter 1:1 'Simon Peter: Set Free To Be A Slave For Christ!'

In his second letter to his son in the faith Timothy, in chapter 4, Paul writes in verses 6-8: "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." We might even say that this could be Paul's epitaph which could be written upon his headstone, as he was led out to give his final breath for Jesus!

He had loved all of the brethren in all of the churches with his whole heart. And he had done so by faithfully proclaiming the full counsel of God from His Word, as it had been revealed to him by God the Holy Spirit! So taking the imagery of the priests offering sacrifices upon God's altar in the temple, Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, (the non-Jewish Christians) like the blood of the sacrificial animals for sin, was about to be "poured out" in service and love for Jesus, and His people!

In like manner, the book of Second Peter is also the epitaph and farewell instruction of Peter, the apostle to the Jews, to the people that he had loved in Christ! The book is believed to have been written between A.D.63-A.D.68, as he was martyred during that time, but the exact date is unknown. And as I have mentioned before, tradition has it that Peter would not consent to being crucified in the same manner as Jesus was, due to his threefold denial upon our Lord's arrest. So he asked to be crucified upside down!

We saw in 1st Peter, among other things, ch.1:3 we have "new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Yes, our hope is living because Jesus lives. In ch.1:13 and following that we are called to a holy life. And also throughout the letter that believers are to "love one another." To "love one another deeply." "From the heart." Ch.2-3: we are to live a life of submitting to authorities over us. Wives to husbands. Children to parents and everyone to the elders! Ch.3-4 Christians will face sufferings in this life even as our Lord Jesus himself did. Ch.5:5: we must "All clothe ourselves with humility toward one, another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. So that in due time he may lift you up."

In ch.5:7: "Cast all your anxieties on him (on God) because he cares for you." Yes, we are always to keep our focus ever and only upon Him.

And finally ch.5:8: "Beware your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour." Once we have put our shoulder to the plough for the Kingdom Satan's design is upon our eternal soul. So we must "be vigilant." "Be on guard." We must "Beware!"

The commentators explain that though there are similarities between the two letters, perhaps the main difference is that while first Peter is him warning the churches about the dangers and persecutions from outside of the church, in 2 Peter, his final instructions are about doing battle and standing up against false teachers and doctrines, that come from within! With his final words the shepherd to the Jewish Christians seeks to feed to the sheep, as Jesus had commanded him to do so in three ways on the beach, some 30 odd years before, to again exhort them to holy living and them growing in Christ through faith by the Holy Spirit. To beware of and to expose false teachers. And also, to be prepared, by their living for Christ, in view of his imminent return!

So after this long introduction, let's have at the text! 2 Peter 1:1: 'Simon Peter: Set Free To Be A Slave For Christ!' V1, translated from the Greek, "Simon Peter, a slave, (a bondservant the NASB adds) and an apostle of Jesus Christ. To the ones who have obtained (received) a faith as equally precious with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

We see from the very beginning of these the great apostle's final words, that humility, which he commends to his readers in his first letter, as he uses the words "Simon Peter, a slave and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Matthew Henry explains that while in his first letter Peter begins with the words "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ," here it is "Simon Peter a slave and an apostle." And he does so for two reasons.

Firstly, in calling himself "Simon Peter," he lays hold of, and not despising, his Jewish heritage. Since these are his final words, he saw this as very important. Because you see, that no doubt within the Sovereignty of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he understood, that these words of his would remain, long after he had departed this world and this life! Yes this was important, because he was writing to predominantly Jewish converts to Christianity. And he again no doubt, was very aware, very conscious, of the inclination that people have for controversy, schism and discord!

In the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks of believers attaching themselves to prominent men, in their desire to exalt themselves by aligning themselves with the most well-known or well respected church leaders. Basically namedropping. And in so doing, they brought about a dividing of the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 we read: "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: one of you says, I follow Paul, another, I follow Apollos, another, I follow Cephas, still another, I follow Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul?"

Yes, Peter was fully aware of the want that people had for vanity and division. That is no doubt why he said in 1 Peter 5:5: "All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another." Yes, "Simon Peter," the Jewish Christian who was called by Christ to minister to Jewish converts, addresses them with his final words beginning with his Jewish name of Simon.

Now why was this important? Well may I suggest that it was important simply because he was doing his utmost to reach his hearers. But he doesn't do so by compromising the truth by any means which many are in the habit of doing today! They compromise their stand against immorality, corruption, debauchery and the sanctity of life. Yes, they compromise their stand against all forms of wickedness and vice and in effect say nothing at all. And in so doing, what's worst of all, is that they compromise what the scriptures say concerning a myriad of things. Even emptying them of their God breathed, inspired authority! Yes, they are afraid of offending anyone. But this is a great insanity, because the gospel by nature being the Very Word of God, is offensive to the fallen nature of humanity. Telling an unsaved person that their sin caused the Son of God to suffer and die is offensive to them. Yes telling them that they are guilty of an innocent man's death is offensive to the unsaved soul!

But no, Peter doesn't compromise his truth by any means he tells his Jewish readers that he is "Simon" by birth and by circumcision, but he is "Cephas which means Peter" as he was named by Jesus. Yes he is "Simon" by both birth and circumcision, but he is "Peter" of Christ! So immediately he disarms them all as he doesn't despise his heritage, and yet he speaks with the authority of the new man. Yes "Simon Peter a slave and an apostle."

Brothers and sisters, I feel that as Christians we really need to be aware of this. That we need to be real people living in a real world. Not that we compromise the things in which we stand and believe, but we be real people. Because the thing which is unique about the Bible is that it reveals God's people to uswarts and all. Yes unlike those so-called grotesque religious artworks, there are no Halos painted by the Holy Spirit around their heads of God's people in the Bible! In the strength of Jesus there are those through whom He did amazing even miraculous things, but nonetheless, they are still all, simply, forgiven sinners. Yes "saved by grace through faith, and this is not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not by works. So that no man may boast." Ephesians 2:8-9.

Ordinary people serving an extraordinary God "by grace through faith." So we too I believe, if we are to promote Christ's gospel to those who are perishing around us, need also to be real people living in a real world! As you all know, being "in the world but not of the world." Yes as Paul did, always seeking to be "all things to all people," and yet never at the price of the compromise of Christ's truth, and our faith and stand that we make in Him. So he is "Simon" the Jew by both birth and circumcision, but he is also "Peter" the saved of Christ!

Then next he is a "slave" or a bondservant. Friends, the words servant, serve, and service, appear over 1400 times throughout the Bible. And the first thing that they convey, (to state the obvious) is someone who is under authority. Although today in reality such a definition does not ring true. But yes, a servant is one who acts under the authority of, or on the behalf of another as they exist under that authority. Well, a "slave" or a bondservant, is someone who is not only under another person's authority, but he's also even morally, or legally fettered or shackled to them by some kind of debt. And interestingly, that is how Peter refers to himself here. And yet he does not speak as though he were under some kind of bondage, no. He speaks as one who has been set free!

Yes he speaks as does King David in Psalm 116:16. Listen closely to the great King's words: "O Lord, truly I am your servant, I am your servant, the son of your maid servant, you have freed me from my chains." Can you see? That such was the great breadth and depth and commitment of the king to God. Not only was he "God's servant," but such was the depth of the King's feeling toward God that it were as though he had been born into that blessed servitude of the Almighty! He calls himself, "the son of God's maidservant." Yes born into this blessed slavery you see.

Beloved, can you see that such is the great honour that the king places upon his being the very "servant of God," that he says it not once, not twice, but three times in the context of this one short verse. Look again at the words "O Lord, truly I am your servant, I am your servant, the son of your maid servant, you have freed me from my chains." The ancient commentator Thomas Adams explains that David spoke not by way of a worldly or humanistic declaration, but by the way of the humble confession of a believer. And he explains also, that similarly as Peter lays hold of the great King's words, he sets the title of "slave, servant" above that of an apostle. First and foremost he was Christ's "slave" His bondservant, and then an apostle. One is an outward calling and office, while the other is an inward grace!

Brothers and sisters notice again the final line of the verse. "You have freed me from my chains." David was no superhero with superpowers of his own you see. Like you and I, he was conceived in sin and born in sin. The chains of sin and death were wrapped around him. Even as Jonah in the belly of the great fish he was being dragged down to the gates of hell by sin. But through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has freed him and us from our chains! Commenting on this verse, Sir Richard Baker says, "Thou hast "loosed my chains" from being a captive to sin, into being a servant, (a slave) of God. Furthermore from being a slave into being a son. And even further still, from being "a son of thy maidservant," to a son of thyself O Lord!"

Yes Beloved, we are born as “slaves” bondservants into a debt of sin, but praise God that because of Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, that debt has been paid for and “God has freed us from our chains.” Hallelujah, what a Saviour! So when Peter writes “Simon Peter a slave,” he places that position which he holds of having God's inward grace above all things. If he does so dear friends, then surely so should we. Because we too “have been set free from sins chains” to be “slaves,” bondservants for Jesus. And we can have no higher calling in this life. Or the next may I suggest!

Peter continues: “to those who have obtained a faith that is as equally precious with us in the righteousness of our God and saviour Jesus Christ.” Brothers and sisters we need always to be reminded that yes we have “obtained” this faith, but it has come to us not through anything that we have done, but through what has been done for us by Jesus. And we need also to remember as we saw in the beginning of first Peter, that it is not our faith that is powerful, (as though the amount of our faith will determine the outcome of our prayers or any given situation). It is the One in whom we have that faith that is all important!

Remember, the “faith as small as a mustard seed” can move mountains, even that mountain of eternal damnation, that is why we pray for our lost family and friends. Yes “faith as small as a mustard seed” Jesus said can move mountains in people's lives. But yet again, it is not our faith, but the One in whom we have that faith which is all important! So yes we have “obtained a faith” but it has been obtained for us by Jesus! And notice how Peter describes this faith. “A faith that is equally as precious with us (or as ours) he writes. Beloved, like God's Kingdom, our faith in its Ruler, in it's King, in Jesus, is “precious.”

In the parable in Matthew 13:44-46, when speaking of things of great value we read: “the Kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. when he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.” but why? Yes why did these men act in this way when finding those things? Because what they found was “precious” to them. According to Jesus, more valuable than everything that they owned. That “treasure,” and that “Pearl,” were more valuable than all of the collective wealth that each of them had acquired throughout their whole lives. Yes that “treasure” and that “Pearl,” were “precious.”

Friends, in the parable Jesus speaks of the “Kingdom of heaven.” But what is the “Kingdom of heaven,” if it is not the rule and authority of the King within the lives of His people. Well Peter explains that like “the Kingdom,” our faith in the King is “precious.” And yet it is not just “precious,” (which is defined as being highly esteemed or of great value). No, our faith, Beloved, is priceless, because it cannot be purchased even at the sale of the whole universe! Think about it, as I've mentioned before, it has come through the most rare, and the most valuable resource throughout all of eternity. Each and every drop of the Blood of the King. And there will never, ever, be even one more drop that will ever be spilled. And remember each drop was spilled for you!

So yes friends, since our faith has come at such an incomparable cost, our “faith is precious.” So I guess the questions are: Do we view it that way? And do we value it that way? Even as Peter did!

And I want you to again take note of the way that we have “obtained” our faith. “In (or through) the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” The word righteous is defined as ‘accepted of God. Free from sin. Upright’. And “righteousness,” defined as being purity of heart and conduct. Holiness. Godliness. Up rightness. This is clearly described in Psalm 24:1-5: “The earth is Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it, for he founded it upon the seas and established it

upon the waters. Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Saviour." Yes it is Jesus, dear friends.

Beloved again, we have "obtained our faith" only through Jesus. We are made right in the sight of God, made righteous, only through the purity of heart and conduct, through the holiness, through the uprightness and through the godliness of Jesus. He is the Only One who was qualified to "ascend the hill of the Lord. To stand in his holy place." By paying the price, and breaking those chains of sin, bondage, death, and hell through His Cross!

Hallelujah, we come to the Father only through The gift of His Son. Only through His Son`s willing sacrifice, and only through God's pouring into our hearts by His blessed Holy Spirit! As we sing in the old hymn, 'My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose went forth and followed Thee'. Praise God for His blessed mercy and forgiveness through Jesus.

But friends, notice also that Peter doesn't say *through* God the father and our saviour Jesus Christ, he actually says, "*in* the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Brothers and sisters, if there were ever any doubt as to who Peter thought Jesus was, with this at the beginning of his parting words to his beloved flocks spread throughout the Roman Empire, he makes it very clear. Jesus is God! There is nothing ambiguous about his words here. "In the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

In like manner in Romans 9:5 Paul also speaks of the absoluteness of the divinity of Jesus. "Theirs are the fathers (or patriarchs) and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God overall, forever praised. Amen." If we think about it, in an ancient world where there was some kind of temple and idol on just about every corner, where temple prostitutes were all part of Pagan worship and getting drunk also part of that worship. Yes in such a place where the flesh reigned amidst a panoply of gods, what did the sheep among wolves need to know? That the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 is Jesus. And Jesus is God!

Yes, Jesus is the God of the Old Testament; you must look to Him for salvation and for perseverance and preservation and truth! I guess the question is dear friends, is it any different today? Clearly the answer is no. If anything the depravity of humanity is only magnified, and also the emptiness of man's existence without God. Yes Jesus is Lord. Jesus is God! The basis for the letter is that not only were there wolves surrounding the flock, but they had breached the walls and were seeking to devour the sheep with their false teaching from within.

As in Jude 3: "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation that we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." Notice Jude`s words, "once for all entrusted to the saints." Why did he write this? Because new things were being introduced. Things were being added. Things were being taken away. That is the way heresy is introduced, it comes about by stealth. "A little leaven" the scriptures say, permeates the whole loaf. Again, like Satan it comes by stealth "as angels of light." Jude 4.

"For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you." Peter goes on to write in 2 Peter 1:16: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty." No we didn't make things up, Peter says. We told you the truth about what we saw with our own eyes! Yes friends Peter had been set free from the slavery to sin, to be Christ`s willing "bondservant" to proclaim the truth about Jesus. And in like manner, (in word and in deed) we are

called to do the same. And in the context of this letter, exposing and standing against false teachers is part of that proclamation!

In his first letter, 1 John 4:1, John writes, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." John MacArthur explains that by "spirits here," John means men, and the spirit behind their teaching. And Beloved, the only way, yes the only way that we can do this, is by saturating ourselves prayerfully in God's Truth, the Bible!

Yes dear friends, we too have been set free from hell`s chains, to be the blessed "bondservants" of Jesus, and we have no higher calling! Praise God!

Let's pray!