

# TEACHING

## A like precious faith

### Study 1 (2 Peter 1:1-2) "A like precious Faith."

#### Introduction

When the apostle Peter wrote this letter he knew that his martyrdom was near. He had no illusions about what was coming upon the Church. The Roman Caesar Nero had already started his systematic persecution of the Church. By imperial decree being a Christian was a criminal offence and punishable by death. When Nero's persecution became widespread throughout the whole of the Roman Empire the true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ suffered terrible atrocities. Some were torn apart by wild beasts in the arena while others were burnt alive on fiery crosses to light up Nero's garden parties. This persecution lasted from 64AD until around 67AD. During this time both the apostles Peter and Paul were martyred. Nero like many other emperors before him was an antichrist. Undoubtedly Nero was demon possessed and quite mad. It is common knowledge that he ordered Rome to be burned and then blamed the Christians for starting the fire.

As history shows us the persecution of Bible believing Christians continued virtually unabated under successive Roman Emperors right up until the time of Constantine when Christianity became the official state religion and Church attendance became compulsory, leading to the beginning of the great apostasy which will have its culmination in the great falling away of professing Christians during the reign of the

Antichrist himself. History shows us that Pagan Rome became religious Rome and that the Popes or Pontiff's of the Roman Catholic Church replaced the Roman Emperors but like the Caesars continued to persecute Bible Believing Christians. This is a fact of history.

Peter's second letter was written against the background of coming persecution and it is applicable to us in these last days because what came upon the Church under the hands of Nero will universally come upon the true Church in the last days under the hand of the antichrist. (Daniel 7:21 12:7) (Revelation 13:7) During the great tribulation the true body of Christ will experience in its last days what the Lord Jesus Himself experienced in His last days. (John 15:18-21) (Hebrews 13:12-14) Like the Lord Jesus His true followers will experience persecution, death, imprisonment and betrayal by many of its leaders and by many false brethren, backsliders and even by family members. (Luke 21:17-19) Before the Lord Jesus comes to rescue His body out of the Great Tribulation it will pass through a time of trial, testing and its hour of crucifixion but Like Jesus it will be resurrected, transfigured and raptured. Peter is writing to the same believers that he was writing to in his first letter. (3:1) Peter encourages the believers to persevere in their walk of holiness before the Lord. In the last days our Christian walk will be vital to our spiritual survival. In the last days lawlessness and rebellion will be so widespread both in the world and the professing Christian Church that

the majority of professing Christians will fall away from their first love and backslide in wholesale lots. Remember what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness (Lawlessness) the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm (endures or has endured) to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:9-13).

The first main theme that runs throughout Peter's letter concerns false teachers who secretly introduce seductive heresies. (2:1-3) If we do not have right doctrine we will not have right conduct. Satan appears in two forms. When he is described as the dragon he is Satan the persecutor but when he is described as the serpent he is Satan the deceiver. If he cannot destroy the Church through persecution he will always revert to spiritual seduction coming from within the Church. Peter warns us about this. (2:1-3) The Lord Jesus and the apostles warned us about false teachers, backsliders and spiritual seduction and that this would be a conspicuous feature in the Church in these last days. (Matthew 24: 4,11-13,24) (Acts 20:29-32) (1 Timothy 4:1-2) (2 Timothy 4:3-4) (Jude)

In both of his letters Peter warns the Church of the coming persecution and history affirms that what he said would happen did happen and continued to happen down to the present time. It is common knowledge that there have been more martyrs in the twentieth century than there has been down through the history of the Christian Church. In most places in the world today true believers are being persecuted for their faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church in the West has been, by enlarge, spared persecution but it is coming.

Persecution does not start with the secular authorities suddenly persecuting the Church. Persecution begins with our leaders betraying us by compromising the truth of the Bible and preaching standards of behaviour that fall short of the Biblical standards. This is precisely what happened in the time of Jeremiah when the leaders led the people astray. Ultimately the people themselves only wanted to hear what suited their desires and appetites. (Jeremiah 5:30-31 6:13-15)

The second main theme deals with the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not have right doctrine that produces right conduct we will not be ready for Jesus return. In the last days there will only be two kinds of believers in the Church. There will be the 'wise virgins' who are faithful and loyal to their spouse the Lord Jesus and the 'foolish virgins' who are faithless and un-loyal to Him. Only those 'virgins' who retain and replenish their 'oil supply' (the Holy Spirit) will have light (the guidance of God's Word) to see in 'the darkness' (the Great Tribulation) but those who do not retain and replenish their 'oil supply' will not have light to see in 'the darkness' and will not be taken at the rapture but left behind. (Matthew 25:1-13)

As the scripture says, "God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are His," and," everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness" (2 Timothy 2: 19). Peter tells us that we should live holy and godly lives and be looking forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ because He is coming only for a bride that is spotless and clean and undefiled by the world. As the apostle John declares by the Spirit of the Lord, "Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear," (Fine linen stands for the

righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:6b-8)

Just before Jesus returns to rapture the Church spiritual deception will be so great that even the very elect will barely escape. Peter tells us this in his first letter, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" (1 Peter 4:18) Many believers will be like Lot who, even though he was righteous, was so attached to this world that he had to be dragged out of the city of Sodom just before it was destroyed by fire. However, multitudes of professing Christians will be like Lot's wife who looked back and was destroyed because she yearned for this world. What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot's time will happen again but on a worldwide scale. (Revelation chapters 8,9,15,16)

If we do not have a basic understanding of God's prophetic purposes and how they are being carried out in these days we will be in darkness and ignorance where world events are concerned. In these last days we need to understand Biblical Prophecy because it will be "a light shining in a dark place" because without it all will be darkness and confusion. (1:19) Peter's letter encourages us not only to be righteous but also to be more righteous and to continue to be righteous especially when we see the day of the Lord rapidly approaching. Right at the end of the book of Revelation we read, "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to every-one according to what he has done" (Revelation 22:11-12). Most of the Biblical admonitions to live holy lives are given in the context of the Coming of the Lord. With these things in mind let us now deal with the letter itself.

*(Vs.1) "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,"*

Peter begins his letter by declaring himself to be a servant and an apostle. He knew that he must be a servant before he was an apostle. True Apostleship is not dictatorial but serves others and leads by example. It certainly is not greedy for money.

In his first letter Peter said, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Peter 4:1-4). The Church, i.e., the Body of Christ itself is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:20)

True leadership is foundational and supports and upholds the building it does not rule from the top. Peter was a servant, literally "a slave" of Jesus Christ. He saw himself as one who had no rights of his own but was totally committed and sold out to his master the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a free willing slave and he served the Lord Jesus because he loved Him and not because he was under compulsion. He was eager to serve and not to dominate and was not greedy for money but willing to lead by example knowing that he would receive his reward from the chief shepherd the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter also says that he is an apostle i.e., one who had been personally commissioned and sent forth by the Lord Jesus Himself to complete a specific task. This task is clearly seen in John's gospel. (John 21:15-19) As an apostle he also had the

authority to declare doctrine, to refute heresy and to write scripture. Jesus Himself had given Peter along with the other disciples this authority when He gave them the keys to the kingdom. (Matthew 16:18-19) There is no new doctrine today as the canon of scripture is complete and there is only a deeper understanding and revelation of the scriptures. Peter along with the others had the authority to unlock the truths' of God's Word and to teach them to others. Even though Peter had this authority conferred on him he still saw himself as a servant. This should be the attitude of a true leader whether he is a pastor, elder, prophet or teacher.

Before a man becomes a leader he must firstly be a servant and learn to serve others with the gifts and abilities he has received from the Lord. He must always be the servant of all. (Matthew 20:26) (1 Peter 4:11) (1 Peter 5:2-3) Peter along with the other eleven apostles was unique because he had seen Jesus Physically alive after His resurrection. Paul the apostle had not seen Jesus physically in the flesh but had experienced a personal encounter with Him. Paul had equal authority with the other apostles because he wrote much of the New Testament. There were other apostles as well but they did not write scripture. Today we still have apostles but they are primarily Church-planting missionaries. Peter continues...

*"To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours."*

The faith that dwelt in the apostles is the same faith that dwells in us as believers. The apostle Paul said concerning this faith, "Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ or as the Greek text says," by the faith of Jesus Christ". So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ (by the faith of Christ) and not by observing the

law, because by observing the law no one will be justified' (Galatians 2:16) This faith is the faith of Jesus Christ Himself fused together with our faith. As the scripture says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him"(1 Corinthians 6:17). This faith comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ Himself consequently God credits the perfect righteous life of His Son to our account enabling us to be justified in His sight. God declares us to be righteous, not on the basis of our own righteous life because we have none but only on the basis of Jesus perfect righteous life. The apostle Paul also said, "That I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ (by the faith of Jesus Christ) the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Philippians 3:8b-9).

So then the faith that dwelt in the apostles now dwells in us and it is a "like precious faith" as the KJV renders it. This faith is precious to us because by it God has declared us to be righteous in His sight even though we have been great sinners and rebels against Him. Only through faith in Jesus Christ and His blood that atoned for our sins can any of us be put right with God. (Romans 3:21-26) (Romans 5:1) Every spiritual blessing we have that proceeds from this faith in us comes to us from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone that we can receive the faith that justifies us before a Just and Holy God. This faith is precious and priceless because through faith we enter into God's Kingdom. This faith also includes the idea of faithfulness that is to say if we have real and genuine justifying faith before God then it will change the way we live. True faith produces faithfulness to Jesus Christ and works of righteousness. (James 2:14-26) How does this faith come to us? How does it grow and develop in us? Firstly, through reading and obeying God's

Word. (Romans 10:17) Secondly, it is developed in us through tests, trials and persecution. (1 Peter 1:5-7) (James 1:2-4) (Job 13:10) Thirdly, we must begin to act on the faith we already have. (Hebrews 11:6)

If we belong to Jesus Christ then God is treating us as He would treat Jesus Christ. We are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus Christ and God is treating us as His children. We are joint-heirs with Christ and all that God has given to His Son He makes available to us. Do we need strength to fight temptation? Jesus has overcome every temptation known to man and will enable us to overcome it too. Do we need perseverance in trials and tests? Jesus will give us His persevere through the power of His Holy Spirit. Do we need wisdom, sanctification and holiness? Jesus is our wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption. Do we need to complete God's will for our lives? Well, He who has begun a good work in us will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

We are God's Children and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Whatever we need whether it is in the spiritual or temporal realm it is available to us from God through the righteous life of His Son Jesus Christ credited to our account in heaven. As the scripture says, "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation" (Romans 5:9-11) So then every blessing available to us from God comes through the righteous life of Jesus Christ and becomes ours through faith in Him. As

the scripture says, "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32)

*(Vs 2) "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."*

Grace is God's undeserved and unearned favour that He bestows upon us and that leads us to faith in Christ. There is nothing we can do to earn God's favour. As the scripture says, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless (in sins' grip) Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, (living in sin and rebellion) Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8) The word 'Grace' is a Greek term of greeting while 'Peace' is a Hebrew term of greeting. It is only when we experience God's grace that we experience His peace. The word for peace used here is 'Shalom' but it does not always imply the absence of conflict but a deep assurance that God is in control even when we may be in the middle of a crisis.

Peter includes both Jews and Gentiles in his greeting because they are all one in Christ Jesus. Notice that Peter tells us that God's grace and peace are ours in abundance i.e., to say God is not stingy with His grace or His peace. As the scripture says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us with all wisdom and understanding" (Ephesians 1:7-8) And again it says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1a)

The only way we can personally receive God's grace and peace for ourselves is through our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not just knowing about Him but knowing Him personally and intimately. It is knowing what He knows, feeling what He feels and thinking what He thinks and knowing how He would speak and act in all the circumstances of our daily lives. How do we get this knowledge? It does not come overnight but through developing our personal relationship with Jesus Himself day by day through knowing His Word, the Bible. Jesus Himself said, "If you continue (abide) in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32)

Our personal relationship with Jesus is developed through His Word and through His Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself also said, "The Spirit gives life: the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have

spoken to you are Spirit and they are life" (John 6:63) We can read and study God's Word but unless the Holy Spirit takes that word and makes it a living reality to our minds and hearts we will not believe. Developing our relationship with Jesus takes time, effort and perseverance because Satan is working around the clock to side-rack us into something else. It is so easy for all of us to loose our first love. Jesus Himself is the Living Word of God and He is in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. When we read and study the Bible we are feeding on Jesus Himself. (John 6:33-58) In the book of Revelation Jesus Himself is called the Word of God.

(Revelation 19:13) If we want to experience God's grace and peace in abundance then we must regularly feed on God's Word. By doing this we will come to love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

## BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION

" For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ "

