

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 3/28/93
I Peter 1:3-9 "Living with the Right Perspective"

Intro:

Q: What's going on in our world?

We are living in a rapidly changing world. Technology is changing. Health care is changing. The political stability of world governments is changing. The pace of life is changing. Entertainment is changing. Morality is changing. And listen. The attitude of our society towards Christianity is changing.

Stats: For example, to proclaim "The Bible says..." commanded respect in the 1930's, 40's, 50's, and even into the 1960's. I don't mean to insinuate that everyone obeyed the Bible then, but at least there was a healthy respect for the authority of God's Word. In fact, in 1963, 65% of Americans said they believed in the absolute truth of all words in the Bible. Within 15 years, by 1978, that number had declined to 38%. And today, only 32% believe the Bible is true. To the majority, the Bible is nothing more than an interesting collection of ancient legends and stories.

Do you know what that means? Today, if we say, "The Bible says," only one out of 3 Americans is even ready to listen to us. (Colson, The Body, 336)

Many are suggesting that we are living in a "post-Christian" nation. Our culture has lost its fundamental Christian presuppositions.

Q: Did you ever wonder why we seldom hear the media portray Christian values in a positive light?

Illust: (Colson, The Body, 366) One study of 100 leading television and film producers found that only 6% attended church. In another survey of 240 leading US journalists, 54% responded that they saw nothing wrong with adultery, 75% considered homosexuality an acceptable lifestyle, 86% seldom or never went to church or synagogue, and 90% believed that abortion was a woman's fundamental right.

Our world is changing.

Q: How can we live as Christians in a non-Christian world?

A: It was that question that drove us to begin a new study in I Peter last week. And it's there we return this morning.

Why is Peter qualified to teach us how to live in a world that is unsympathetic to the cause of Christ?

1. The world of his day was unsympathetic to Christians. In fact, when Peter wrote this epistle, Christians were despised. The Emperor Nero instigated severe persecution against the followers of Christ. Peter himself would be martyred for Christ within 2 years of writing this letter.

2. Peter wrote this letter to encourage hurting, battered Christians.

V 1 "Peter...to the sojourners scattered..."

If you think our society is antagonistic towards Christianity, consider this. Peter wrote to people who had lost their jobs, lost their homes, and some perhaps would even lose their lives.

Q: How can we learn to how to live as Christians in our world?

We can learn a lot from this letter God gave us through Peter.

Review from last week:

Here's where Peter starts. We need to get a hold of 2 truths about our identity.

I. We are Sojourners in the world (1).

We are resident aliens. This world is our temporary home.

II. We are Special to God (2).

The church is not merely a social organization. The church does not just "happen" to exist. No, the church exists...

- A. By the Design of God the Father
- B. By the Display of God the Holy Spirit
- C. By the Deliverance of God the Son

Q: Since God has done that for us, how should we respond?

A: Peter tells us in vv 3-12. There's only one way to respond.

V 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Vv 3-12 are a marvelous doxology of praise to God. Peter begins his letter with a blessing. He calls on us to bless God.

Think of that. Peter wrote to encourage hurting, victimized, persecuted people. What counsel does he give first? When faced with suffering, here's where you start. Learn to bless God. Learn to live with the right perspective.

Most of us have a problem. We tend to have a narrow view of two things: One is Salvation. The other is Suffering. "If God saved us, why do we still suffer in this life?" That's the question Peter answers for us in vv 3-12.

Proposition: In I Peter 1:3-9, Peter teaches us how to live with the right perspective. We need to learn to bless God for three things, three key words.

I. Bless God for what He has done in the Past (3a).

Key Word: Mercy

II. Bless God for what He will do in the Future (3b-5).

Key Word: Hope

- A. The Reason for Our Salvation (3)
- B. The Result of Our Salvation (3)
- C. The Rationale of Our Salvation (3)
- D. The Reward of Our Salvation (4-5)

III. Bless God for what He is doing in the Present (6-9).

Key Word: Suffering

- A. When suffering, focus on the Plan of God (6-7).
- B. When suffering, focus on the Person of Christ (8).
- C. When suffering, focus on the Prize of God (9).

I. Bless God for what He has done in the Past (3a).

Key Word: Mercy

Q: What did God do for us in the past?

V 3 "Blessed be the God...who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us"

Here's what God has done for us in the past. God the Father has "begotten" us. That word appears only twice in the NT, here, and in 1:23, "Being born again..."

God the Father gave us a new birth. He brought us into His family. In order to become a Christian, you must be born again (Jn 3:6). If you are a Christian, you have experienced the lifechanging work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible calls that regeneration (Tit 3:5). When God regenerates us, life begins all over again. We experience a radical change.

Here's where living with a right perspective starts. Bless God for what He has done in the past. He saved us. He gave us new birth.

Q: Has God done that in your life? Then bless Him.

Illust:

Tran: There's a second thing we must learn to do if we're to live with the right perspective. Bless God for what He has done in the past, and...

II. Bless God for what He will do in the Future (3b-5).

Key Word: Hope

Observation: We tend to think of salvation only in the past tense. And salvation certainly involves that. Salvation is something Christ accomplished in the past. But having said that, there's a future element to salvation (see v 5).

The words "hath begotten" are the main verb in v 3. God gave us new birth. God saved us. But why? And for what? Notice 4 modifying phrases Peter uses to teach us about our salvation:

A. The Reason for Our Salvation (3): "according to His mercy"

V 3 "Who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us"

We don't earn salvation. It's an undeserved gift.

B. The Result of Our Salvation (3): "unto a living hope"

V 3 "unto a living hope"

Hope is a great word in the Bible. We serve a God of hope. Rom 15:13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing..."

The world offers an empty hope. God offers us a living hope. It's living because it's a real hope. And the reason it's real is because our hope is based on a living person, Jesus Christ.

C. The Rationale of Our Salvation (3): "by the resurrection of Jesus"

V 3 "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"

Q: Do you know what the greatest event in history is? What event stands at the fulcrum of human existence?

A: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Christianity is founded upon this key truth. We serve a risen Savior. Jesus Christ, after dying for our sins, conquered death. No matter what the world does to us,

we have a living hope! Death has no grip on us. Why not? Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Let's look at I Cor 15.

15:4 "And that He was buried, and that He rose again..."

15:14 "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain."

15:17 "And if Christ be not raised...ye are yet in your sins."

15:19 "If in this life only we have hope...we are...most miserable."

15:20 "But now Christ is risen from the dead and become the first fruits..."

The Resurrection of Christ is the Rationale of our salvation. How is it possible that people like us, who were once dead in our sins, could experience a lifechanging, new birth? By the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There's no other way.

Having seen the reason, the result, and the rationale for our salvation, Peter next points us to the future.

D. The Reward of Our Salvation (4-5): "To an inheritance"

V 4 "To an inheritance incorruptable..."

This is terrific! I want you to look carefully at what God will do for His people in the future. Here's the future aspect of our salvation. God will reward us with an inheritance.

Q: What kind of inheritance?

1. Incorruptable--undecaying; can't be destroyed by hostile forces
2. undefiled--it won't spoil like overripened fruit
3. Fadeth not away--it won't fade in color like a lampshade in the sun
4. Reserved in heaven--it's eternal. Things here on earth come and go.

You buy a car today, and it's shiny and spotless. In ten years, it's become a rusty pile of metal that you have trouble keep running. Things wear on earth wear out. You put your money in a savings and loan today. It may or may not be there tomorrow. But listen. Our inheritance is in a bank account in heaven.

Q: What is our inheritance?

A: V 9 Peter calls it "the salvation of our souls." = God Himself (Ps 73:25-26)

Objection: "Ok, we've got an inheritance reserved in heaven. That's great. But we're here on earth. How can we be sure we'll make it? Can a Christian fall off the wagon?"

Notice Peter's answer...

V 5 "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation..."

Notice the passive. We "are kept." Kept is a military word. It means "to guard, to shield." What is it that guards the believer?

"by the power of God"--Divine intervention

"through faith"--human responsibility

God saved us in the past. God keeps us saved in the present. God will keep us saved until what?

"unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"

See the future aspect of our salvation? God sees the big picture. We don't. We see the struggles and pressures of this life. He sees the coming reward. Our challenge is to see things from God's perspective!

Illust:

Tran: How can we live as Christians in a non-Christian world? We need to learn to live with the right perspective. We need to learn to bless God, for what He has done in the past, for what He will do in the future. Now we come to where the rubber meets the road.

III. Bless God for what He is doing in the Present (6-9).

Key Word: Suffering

God never designed the Christian life to be a bed of roses. In fact, Peter makes no bones about the fact that Christians can expect trials in this life. He mentions the theme of "suffering" some 15 times in this letter (see: 4:1, 12-13).

As it was for our Lord, so for us. Before the Crown came the Cross. The grind precedes the gain.

Key: We need to learn to bless God for what He is doing in the Present.

Q: What's the right perspective to have when dealing with suffering?

A: Focus on three things...

A. When suffering, focus on the Plan of God (6-7).

Key Truth: "A living hope results in a present joy!" (BKC)

V 6 "In this ye greatly rejoice..."

Peter mentions rejoicing and trials in the same breath. The two don't seem compatible, do they? But they are for the child of God. We do rejoice--in the salvation of God which is ready to be revealed. But we do suffer now, for a season, manifold trials (=many colored).

Q: How can we rejoice when we're suffering for Christ?

A: Focus on the Plan of God. In God's Plan, suffering fulfills a purpose.

V 7 "That the trial of your faith..."

I don't think Peter is talking about life's normal problems here. The "trial of your faith" seems to refer to persecution. Peter's readers were going through the fire because of their commitment to Christ.

Q: What purpose do trials serve in God's Plan?

Illust: Peter explained by referring to a Goldsmith. How does a Goldsmith purify his gold? He puts it into the smelting furnace. Why? To remove the cheap impurities. The fire cleanses the gold. The heat increases the value of his raw material. Once the impurities are gone, he pours the liquid gold into a mold and fashions a beautiful article.

I read that in the Eastern culture, a goldsmith would keep the metal in the furnace until he could see his face reflected in it.

Here's God's Plan. Our God uses trials to refine us. He keeps us in the furnace of suffering until we reflect the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ.

Trials are no accident. God uses suffering for two key reasons.

1. Trials prove the reality of faith.

In v 7, the words "trial" and "be tried" are from the same root. It means to test something for the purpose of approving. Warren Wiersbe put it this way, "A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted." It's sad, but true. A person can be a professing Christian, but not have a genuine faith. Trials prove whether your faith is real.

Illust: Lk 8:13 Parable of 4 soils

Key: If a person does not hold up under testing, he reveals that his faith was not genuine. Genuine faith hangs in there, by the power of God.

2. Trials result in praise and honor to God.

We'll see how in later studies in I Peter.

B. When suffering, focus on the Person of Christ (8).

V 8 "Whom having not seen you love"

Key: True faith is not merely believing some abstract truths. True faith has as its object a Person, Jesus Christ.

Peter had spent 3 years with Jesus. We, like Peter's readers, have never had the privilege of actually seeing Jesus. And we never will in this life.

Yet we love Him! This entitles us to a special blessing. Remember what Jesus told Thomas in Jn 20:29? "Thomas because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

We were saved by looking to the Person of Christ. When suffering, not only must be focus on the Plan of God, but specifically on the Person of Christ.

Illust: Testimony of Joe Gibbs, former coach of Redskins

C. When suffering, focus on the Prize of God (9).

V 9 "Receiving the end of your faith..."

Notice Peter says we are "receiving" the end ("telos" =goal) of our faith. That's present tense. What's he mean? Each day brings the believer one day closer to that final day!

Illust:

Conclusion:

Q: Are you living with the right perspective? Have you learned to make it a practical part of your life to bless God for His Salvation? Do you praise Him for what He has done in the past, for His mercy? Do you bless God for what He's going to do in the future, for His Hope? Are you blessing Him for what He's doing right now in the present, for His use of suffering to refine you?

Illust: