

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/5/93
I Peter 5:10-14 "The Need for Encouragement"

Intro: Encouragement.

Illust: I read the story about a visitor from another culture who visited the USA. He was crushed by what happened to him when he attended a North American church for a few months. The church had an evening fellowship service. The visitor was warmly introduced to the body. A number of people went out of their way to greet him. Several even said, "We'd love to have you over for dinner sometime soon." The young man was delighted. He spent the next week waiting for the phone to ring. Sometimes he even rushed home from work so he wouldn't miss the call he knew would come.

But, you guessed it, the call did NOT come. Not until 3 months later. That man learned the hard way something about our American culture. He learned that Americans are notorious for speaking words that have little meaning (from Encouragement, 21).

Did you ever stop to think about how meaningless many of our greetings are? Often we say things like, "How's it going?" or "Good to see you" or "Hi, how are you?" but what we really mean is "Keep your distance. I'm just being polite."

We live in a fragmented society. People are hurting all around us. Perhaps we are hurting too. There's a desperate need for something God designed to be abundant in the church. This morning, we want to explore what God's Word has to say about the Need for Encouragement.

Lawrence Crabb and Dan Allender co-authored a book a few years ago entitled, Encouragement: The Key to Caring. Here's what they say, "Every Christian, regardless of gift or training, is called upon to encourage his brothers and sisters. Whatever the direction in which our particular congregation is moving, church life will include spending time in the presence of other Christians. And when we meet together as God's people, we are to encourage one another, to say and do things that stimulate others to a deeper appreciation of Christ and to stronger commitment to our relationship with Him and with each other." (15)

Usually, when we talk about the need for encouragement, our first thought is, "Yea, I need to be encouraged! I hope the person next to me is taking good notes so he or she will start meeting my needs." But this morning, I want to offer you a challenge. I want to challenge all of us to see our biblical need to BE an encourager.

Q: How do you encourage someone?

This morning, as we finish our 6 month study of the book of I Peter, we're going to see how Peter encouraged his hurting Christian friends.

Proposition: In I Peter 5:10-14, Peter shows us that we can encourage others in two refreshing ways.

I. We can encourage others with God's Truth (10-11).

- A. An encourager helps others see Who God Is.
- B. An encourager helps others see What God Is Doing.
 - 1. Past
 - 2. Present
 - 3. Future

II. We can encourage others with the Love of God's People (12-14).

It's great to see how Bible writers wrapped up the books they wrote. Our tendency often is to rush over the closing comments. But I've found we miss out when we do.

As Peter closed up his letter, under the direction of the Spirit, he reiterated the key themes he taught throughout the book. Such as: Suffering, the Grace of God, Glory, Spiritual Development, and the centrality of Christ.

In fact, Peter actually tells us at the end why he wrote this letter.

V 12 "I have written briefly exhorting and testifying..."

Peter had 2 objectives in mind when he wrote this letter to the hurting Christians living in Asia Minor. First, to encourage (that's what the word "exhort" means, "parakaleo"). And second, to teach about the Grace of God.

Peter was an encourager. He intended his words to encourage his fellow-believers in Christ. We can learn to become more effective encouragers by heeding the apostle's example.

How did Peter encourage others? How can we?

I. We can encourage others with God's Truth (10-11).

Vv 10-11 "But the God of all grace..."

Here's the most effective way to refresh people who are hurting. Encourage them with God's truth. Give them that which is unchanging and reliable.

Let's watch how Peter used God's truth to encourage his Christian brethren. As we do so, we'll discover 2 practices of an effective encourager.

A. An encourager helps others see Who God Is.

V 10 "But the God of all grace"

Stop right there. What a great way to bring hope to hurting people, by emphasizing the Grace of God! If anything ought to encourage us, that should. Our God is a God of Grace. We tend to forget that, especially when trials hit. All we can see is the problem. But here's what an encourager does. An encourager helps others see clearly Who God is.

We serve the God of Grace. He does not deal with us as we deserve. Instead, He lavishly pours out upon us His rich blessings.

II Cor 8:9 "But you know the GRACE of our Lord..."

II Tim 2:1-2 "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the GRACE..."

Illust:

That's the first practice of an effective encourager--help others see Who God is.

B. An encourager helps others see What God Is Doing.

Watch how Peter fixes our perspective on the activity of God, past, present, and future. He invites us to think about what God is doing. Because God is a God of grace, notice His action.

1. Past

V 10 "Who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus"

God called us. Don't let that word "called" intimidate you. One of the most encouraging attributes of God is His Sovereignty. Our God is sovereign. That means He is in absolute control of everything. Here Peter reminds us that God called us. That phrase speaks of the sovereign work of God in our salvation.

Many people have a bad taste when they hear the word "election." That's unfortunate. The Bible presents the doctrine of election as an encouraging doctrine.

It was to Peter. You'll recall Peter began his letter focusing on God's sovereign work in salvation. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God..." (1:2). And Peter ended his letter on the same theme. "The church...elected together with you." (5:13).

The God of grace called us. You say, "Well didn't I call on God in order to be saved?" Yes, Rom 10:13 says that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But never forget, He called us before we ever called Him. His Spirit worked in our hearts when we were dead in sin, and disinterested in God. He opened our eyes to our need for Christ.

Q: Unto what did God call us? "unto His eternal glory"

Wow! We've been called to glory. Peter uses the term "glory" 8 times in this letter.

Q: How did God call us out of our sins unto His eternal glory?

A: Three words--"by Christ Jesus"

Illust:

Tran: An encourager helps others see what God did in the past. Secondly...

2. Present

V 10 "after ye have suffered awhile"

Peter was a realist. His friends were suffering. He didn't play mind games with them and tell them to pretend things were fine and dandy. They weren't. Some of his readers had already lost their homes and businesses. And some would inevitably lose their lives for Christ. In fact, it would be only a year after Peter lay down his pen that he would lay down his life as a martyr for Christ.

So Peter didn't downplay the suffering. But do you know what he did?

Key: He put the suffering into perspective.

Q: How did Peter put suffering into perspective? 3 ways.

First, throughout the letter he drove home the truth that since Christ suffered, we can expect to suffer (4:1). We are called to follow in His steps (3:21).

Second, Peter put our suffering into perspective by reminding us that God is in control of the suffering (4:19).

The third way Peter put suffering into perspective was by painting a bold, stark contrast. Don't miss the contrast Peter makes in v 10 between suffering and glory--
Contrast: "ETERNAL glory...suffered AWHILE"

Here's a great way to encourage a hurting brother in Christ. Don't minimize the pain. But help them to see beyond the pain. Our suffering will last only a "little while" but our glory in Christ will be eternal.

Let me ask you a question, "What's 70 years compared to eternity?"

Note: We can put up with a lot if we know it's only for a little while!

Tran: An encourager helps others see what God did in the past, is doing in the present,

3. *Future*

Peter uses 4 future tense verbs to reveal what God will do for His children. The God of grace who called us in the past has a purpose in mind for us. We can count on Him to do the following.

a. Make you perfect

The word means "to make complete." In a medical context the word was used to depict setting a fractured bone. In Mk 1:9 it's used for mending nets. It suggests the act of supplying what is missing or mending what is broken.

That's what God does. He uses suffering to refine us, to shape our lives so that we resemble His Son. And here's His guarantee. The suffering has a purpose. A sovereign God makes no mistakes. After He has allowed us to go through the fiery furnace of trials, He will make us perfect.

b. Establish you

To establish means "to make fast." NASB "confirm." NIV "make you strong." Commentator William Barclay says the word means "to make as solid as granite."

The next word is closely related...

c. Strengthen you

It's the only time this greek word appears in the NT. What does it mean? Just what it says! God promises to strengthen us! God's strength will always be sufficient to meet the demands of life.

d. Settle you

It means "to lay a foundation." Remember Jesus' analogy in Mt 7? Which house stood firm in the storm? The house with the right foundation, the house built on the solid rock.

Listen. God doesn't intend for His children to be shifting and unstable. But a lot of Christians are just that. They're floundering and wishy washy. Why?

I want you to see what Paul says in Col 2:6-7. We have a responsibility AFTER we become a Christian. What is it?

Col 2:6 "As you have received Christ...so walk ye in Him"

Col 2:7 "Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith., as you have been taught."

Have you received Christ as Lord? Great! Are you walking in Him? Are you diligently seeking to build your life upon Him?

Illust:

Q: Do you know what a wishy washy, unstable person needs?

A: He needs to get a clearer perspective of Who God is, and what He is doing.

Challenge: If we're going to be effective encouragers, that's our task.

Why? What's our motive?

V 11 "To Him be glory and dominion forever."

Tran: There's a second important way we can encourage others. From Peter's example, the first way is with God's Truth.

II. We can encourage others with the Love of God's People (12-14).

Vv 12-14 "By Silvanus..."

The first thing that strikes me is that Peter called this letter brief! It's interesting that he considers 105 verses brief (although the writer of Hebrews made the same claim in 13:22 and his letter was 13 chapters long!). Possibly what Peter means is this. What he wrote was brief considering his subject. He gave us 105 verses on the grace of God. He could have written 1,005 verses on so grand a topic!

Note: Peter closed both of his letters with very specific instructions about our responsibility in light of God's grace.

I Pt 5:12 "In which ye stand" (actually an imperative, "Stand in grace.")

II Pt 3:18 "Grow in grace."

Which brings us to the second way Peter encouraged his readers. He encouraged them with God's Truth. And he encouraged them with the love of God's People.

Q: How did he encourage them with the love of God's people?

A. He sent them a Good man.

Peter was not alone in the composition of this letter. His amanuensis was Silvanus, which is an alternate form of the name Silas (eg--Charles, Chuck). Apparently, Silas was the scribe who wrote and even delivered this letter. By the way, there is great reason to believe this is the same Silas who was Paul's helper. In fact, he traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey through Asia minor, the destination of Peter's letter.

You have to admire Silas. Even though we know very little about him, we know this. The two most important leaders in the early church, Peter and Paul, valued him as a great right hand man.

And quite possibly, if it's true that Peter delivered the letter by Silas, Peter counted on Silas to have a refreshing ministry with the saints in Asia.

B. He sent them Good news.

Vv 13-14 "The church that is in Babylon..."

Lit. v 13 begins, "she who is in Babylon." Who is the she? One suggestion is that it's Peter's wife. More likely, it's the members of the church.

Where is Babylon? It's unlikely that Peter is referring to the literal Babylon in modern day Iraq. According to church tradition, Peter was in Rome at the time. Apparently, he's using "Babylon" in a figurative sense. It may be that he's using the disguised title to protect both the church in Rome and himself from Nero's persecution.

But here's the point. Peter sent his readers good news. A church in Italy sent greetings to the believers in Asia minor.

Do you think they'd ever even met? Most probably had not. Yet there was a family bond, a tie, an affection, a concern.

Challenge: Many of us have too narrow of a view of what God is doing. We think if it's not happening right here in our backyard, it's not important. We need to develop a broader view, a kingdom perspective.

Illust:

Finally, Peter called on his readers to encourage one another. How?

V 14 "Greet one another..."

Quote: Barclay, "To us the kiss of peace may seem very far away. It came from the day when the church was a real family and fellowship, when Christians really did know and love o.a. It is a tragedy that the modern church, often with vast congregations who do not know each other and do not even wish to know each other, could not use the kiss of peace..." (281)

I'm not recommending kissing. But we need to learn to learn to practice some heart to heart encouraging.

Conclusion:

There's a great need for encouragement in the church.

Q: Are you an encourager? Do you refresh people?

Q: Do you want to be an encourager?

If so, I challenge you to follow Peter's example. Let's get our eyes off of ourselves. Let's learn to encourage others. How?

By passing on God's Truth, and helping hurting people to get a clearer perspective of Who God is and what God is doing. And secondly, by passing on God's Love through us.

Illust: Anne Ortlund in her book Up with Worship