

Kept By Faith

1 Peter 1:5

I. Declaring His Works

As we work our way through First Peter we are finding and will continue to find the theme of Peter being trust and patient obedience. Perhaps the one verse that best summarizes Peter's concern is found in chapter four. It reads:

“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to *Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19).

Robert Leighton, in his commentary on First Peter writes:

The heads of doctrine contained in it (1 Peter) are many, but the main that are most insisted on, are these three, faith, obedience and patience; to establish them (Christians) in believing, to direct them in doing and to comfort them in suffering.”

Trust Before Obedience

Trusting, obeying and doing so patiently is the theme of Peter and may very well be a theme we see running through the entire Bible. And although we are continually practicing all three of these, there seems to be an importance to the order. Before we can truly be comforted in our suffering -- before we can properly understand the spirit and the specifics in which we are to obey -- we must be established in what we believe. After all, why would I obey somebody who wasn't worthy of my trust? And how could I be comforted in suffering for someone if I didn't possess any depth in my understanding of who or what He is. If someone with no power or character at all is saying “trust me” it will affect me quite differently than someone with both extreme power and impeccable character saying the same thing.

The Example Of Wars

It wasn't hard rallying troops for the civil war. Half the country was fighting for states rights and the other half was fighting to free the slaves. You had two groups of people fully convinced that they were right and were willing to die and practically destroy the country for their convictions. Although war is tragic, there was a certain amount of excitement and support in World War II because there was a very specific enemy, namely the Nazis and Adolph Hitler. People knew of his atrocities and were willing to suffer to stop him. More recently we have seen and heard the same national outrage in situations like the American hostage crisis during the closing years of the Carter administration. Americans were quite willing to go to war against the Ayatollah Khomeini. Similar passionate sentiments are felt against Qadaffi, and Saddam Hussein. One confrontation where we didn't see this was in Viet Nam. It was a confusing war. People didn't know

why we were there. There was no clear presentation of the ideology we were fighting. The enemy didn't have a face we could recognize as evil and therefore the war was lost at the democratic national convention and the college campuses on American soil. People were poorly educated about what was going on.

What Has He Done?

The strength for the Christian walk comes from a pure, unadulterated, Spirit governed, sound apprehension of what the Bible teaches about who God is, who we are and what God has done, is doing and will do for us through Jesus Christ. And since we are daily called to step onto the battle field, seeking to patiently obey, we must also daily be re-established in what we believe. What is the nature and character of this God for whom we are called to fight? And have we begun to scratch the surface seeking to find what He has done for us? Psalm 107:21,22 reads:

“Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD *for* His goodness, And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men! ²² Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, And declare His works with rejoicing” (Psalm 107:21,22).

So before we take another step in the pursuit of holiness and patient obedience, let us stop this morning and consider His wonderful works to the children of men. Let us declare His works with rejoicing. This has been the method of Peter as he begins his epistle.

II. A Quick Review

As we studied previously, Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ reminds us that we have been brought into God's kingdom, sanctified by the Spirit of God, called to obedience and ever covered by the sprinkled blood of Christ, not because of anything we have done but by God's predestinative election. It was a holy decision made in the hidden chambers of eternity before the foundation of the world. It is much deeper than any of us may have initially thought. Peter teaches us that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ God has born us again to a living hope, and an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled and that does not fade away. This inheritance is reserved for us in heaven. This brings us up to date.

III. Blessed Hope

Let's now take a look at verse five. Peter writing about Christians refers to them as those, **“who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”** Firstly we have the blessed hope.

Full Revelation

Peter has told us that there is an inheritance reserved for us in heaven. It is a salvation that will be revealed in the last time. In other words Peter is seeking to

encourage Christians to look forward to the final judgment and resurrection for that event will yield a full revelation of our salvation.

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’ (Matthew 25:34).

True Eschatology

True eschatology has little or nothing to do with the building of temples made by hands, computer chips, political despots or the physical nation of Israel. True eschatology is the study of last times or last things as it is revealed in the promises of a kingdom prepared for the blessed of the Father, i.e. Christians. It has been prepared for you, Jesus says, from the foundation of the world. I wish I saw more books on the resurrection and judgment day and heaven and on what the Bible says about what happens when we die and less books on how the President of Spain is the anti-Christ.

Our Blessed Hope

Titus 2:13 tells us that the coming of Christ is our blessed hope. When Christ comes again it will be the end of history. When He comes again it will be the one great general resurrection and judgment day. By His grace He will bring His sheep safely into eternity and we will fully know as we are fully known. The full expression of what has been done for us will be revealed to us.

IV. Perseverance

Will I Make It?

Yet another question remains, perseverance. “How do I know that I will make it?” Being a Christian during the writing of this epistle could mean facing death and many of these people had already seen large chunks of their contemporaries opt for a less dangerous worldview. At very least the impossible standards of the Christian faith continually leave you and me at a loss. Assuming heaven exists, what assurance do we have that the living hope, the incorruptible inheritance is something or someplace where we will, in fact, arrive?

Globe Trotters

When I was about eleven years old my friends older brother had tickets to the Harlem Globe Trotters. Tickets on the players bench. He invited me to the game and we proceeded to drive to the arena. On the way he was pulled over for not having his headlights on. As it turned out he had some outstanding tickets and was hauled into jail. Instead of spending the evening sitting on the players bench watching the Harlem Globe Trotters I spent the evening in the lobby of a police station. You see the tickets got you in the game but they didn't necessarily get you to the game. If you couldn't get to the game on your own, the tickets were pretty worthless. Is this the way heaven is? Is the fact that

Jesus died for you like a ticket that will get you into the game provided you can make your way to the arena? Or does the power of the cross take you all the way from your slumbering bed into the front row? I suggest it is the latter.

The Necessity Of Faith

In this illustration the transportation to the arena can be likened to faith. Although you might acknowledge that God exists, without faith in God you will spend eternity in the police station (or actually in Gehenna or the eternal displeasure of God.) We know that without faith (presumably faith in Christ) it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). We also know that we are justified by faith and therefore have peace with God (Romans 5). This brings us to the final issue of verse five -- faith. Why do I need it? From where does it come? And how do I know that I will have it tomorrow? I am told that I must have faith. Does that mean that faith is my contribution? Is God telling me that He will let me in the game providing I can get there on my own through my faithmobile?

Sin Of Unbelief

Every once in a while I come upon the awareness of something in my Christian faith that genuinely startles me. A number of years ago I was reading sermons by Charles Spurgeon as part of my regular devotions when I came upon a sermon called the sin of unbelief. Although I thought people were in error who didn't believe I always considered unbelief itself as somewhat morally neutral. Even if it was somewhat sinful it wasn't as blatant as other sins like lying or stealing. The more I examined the subject the more I became aware of the fact that, according to the Bible, the sin of unbelief was perhaps the most egregious of sins. The author of Hebrews writes, **“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12)**. And after all, is this not the subject of the first commandment? When God entreats us to “have no other Gods” is He not in essence saying that it is the primary and first violation of God's law not to believe in Him? How can this be? The answer is quite simple.

The First Thing We Know

Before you and I know that it is wrong to lie and steal -- before we know it is wrong to murder and cheat -- before we know that one plus one equals two (when I say before I mean before in order and surety) -- before we know anything we know there is a God. There are very few things the Bible says all men know. The only thing that I am aware of is that all men know there is a God. The first chapter of Romans gives us some insight on this subject. I don't have time to go into a full lesson on the passage so I will merely point out things germane to our present topic. In verses eighteen through twenty-one Paul points out that through His very creation, what may be known of God is manifest in men for God has shown it to men. And although His invisible attributes and eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, men suppress the truth in unrighteousness. What we learn from this passage is that rejecting the truth of God's existence is not a morally

neutral act but is an act of unrighteousness¹. From this information I learn at least two things:

He Died For My Unbelief

First, my unbelief, expressed by my faithlessness, is one of the sins for which Christ died. Faith, therefore, is not my contribution but was won for me by Christ on the cross. Jesus is the author and finisher of faith. This is yet another Biblical understanding of God and things that reveals the error of thinking that man is saved by human decision or by an act of free will in opposition to God's free grace. This is not merely some lofty theological argument but seeks to lop off a huge portion of the cross of Christ. He died for my unbelief. Will I rob Christ of the glory of dying for such a heinous aspect of my depravity? Or will I thank Him that, at a great price, He opened my eyes and heart and granted me faith?

He Maintains My Faith

Secondly, and more in context of the present passage, this sin of unbelief for which Christ died is a sin that Christ successfully vanquished and maintains victory over by His intercession and power of His righteous blood. Let us once more read the verse, **“who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”** On the assumption that by grace we have genuinely called upon the name of Christ, the promise is that we are kept by the power of God through faith. Let's fillet this verse a bit.

Kept

We are 'kept'. The word is often used in a military context to be kept safe or carefully watched. Interestingly the word can mean both kept from escaping and protected from attack. God is preserving believers from escaping out of His kingdom, and He is protecting them from external attacks. The present participle gives the sense that we are continually being guarded.

Power of God

The energy by which we are kept is the power of God. What can possibly be more encouraging or give us a greater sense of security in the salvation of our souls than recognizing that the surety of our salvation is based upon the power which holds everything together? If we are kept for salvation by the power of God we are more sure of our salvation than we are of the earth rotating on it's axis and the particles of material which comprises the chair your sitting remaining in a state of adhesion and not exploding

¹ This is why I radically disagree with J. P. Moreland's assertion that it is possible that God doesn't exist. If the Bible teaches that men know God exists, it is impossible that He doesn't exist. The authority of this statement comes from what the Bible says men know. Unless of course the Bible is teaching that men know this even though it isn't true which would reduce Paul's teaching to nonsense.

into oblivion. There is simply no chance of anything internal or external, material or immaterial, overcoming the power.

Through Faith

Finally God uses His power to guard His people through the means of faith. God saves us by grace through faith. God's power energizes and continually sustains individual, personal, saving faith. There has always been, within the people of God, those who look for a sign from God that would buttress their security. It could be an outward sign like a miracle or an inward sign like some feeling of contentment or something like the supposed second blessing of the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by the modern notion of tongues. Jesus' response to these desires among God's people was that it is an evil and adulterous people who look for a sign. Jesus told Thomas that the blessed people are those who do not see yet still believe.

The Presence Of Faith

What you and I must recognize is that the presence of faith in Christ and our desire to repent and be obedient children, no matter how small the faith or how bumbling the obedience, is a sign to us that the power of God is at work in our lives. Heaven help us not underestimate the significance of the presence of faith in our lives. To have faith in Christ and yet still be spiritually discontent until we get something more is like a POW being rescued from the enemy and during his flight home he is sullen and vexed because they're handing out pistachios instead of macadamia nuts. He's missing the point. He either doesn't understand what he's been rescued from, the price paid for the rescue to take place or to where he is being delivered. Let us not be so short-sighted. The presence of faith in our lives is a demonstration of the power of God keeping us unto salvation. I would like to finish with a quote from Wayne Grudem on this verse. He states,

“This last phrase makes it difficult if not impossible to see any end to God’s guarding activity. If God’s guarding has as its purpose the preservation of believers until they receive their full, heavenly salvation, then it is safe to conclude that God will accomplish that purpose and they will in fact attain that final salvation. Ultimately their attainment of final salvation depends on God’s power. Nevertheless, God’s power continually works through their faith. Do they wish to know whether God is guarding them? If they continue to trust God through Christ, God is working and guarding them, and He should be thanked.”