

August 6, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Peace in Chaos
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from 2 Peter 1:1-4.

1. What is the significance (if any) of the names Peter used to identify himself as the writer of this letter?
2. How do we obtain faith?
3. What is multiplied grace and peace?
4. What are the “things” that pertain to life and godliness?
5. What are the great and precious promises and what happens if they impact us?
6. What does it feel like to experience escape from the corruption that is in the world because of sin?

PEACE BY KNOWING GOD **2 Peter 1:1-4**

The question about peace might seem to some people to be subjective. Most ideas today are subjective in the minds of modern thinkers. Therefore, someone might truly believe that what you might find as a source of peace would not be the same channel by which someone else would find peace. For example, you might find peace by reading your Bible and praying. But your coworker finds peace by doing yoga and flushing out her brain through Eastern Mysticism.

So which of the two examples really experiences peace? In your world of toleration, some people are willing to let you find peace according to your preferred method. But in their opinion you have no right to tell them that they are not using the right means to find peace or to assert that what they find is not really peace.

If all we have is human wisdom and experience by which to judge such conclusions, we pretty much have to take a laissez-faire position – you do peace your way and I’ll do peace my way. Such is the limitation of human wisdom. But trumping all human wisdom is Jesus’ offer: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid*” (John 14:27).

Suddenly we are faced with the certainty that there is a true peace contrasted with the various types of pseudo-peace the world offers. We must deal with the reality that there is really only one source of peace, not multiple sources as vast as every human opinion or preference.

The questions for us then are: “Do we really want to experience genuine peace?” “What is the source of true peace?” “How do we access the source of true peace?” “Are we really experiencing that genuine peace of God?” Peter answers all of those questions for us in his second letter. The answers are not difficult to understand. The requirements for finding and experiencing peace are not stringent and certainly not impossible. As we have discovered in so many of our other lessons about having peace in a world of chaos, the practice is simply a matter of reading our Bibles and having fellowship with God through a right relationship with Him.

The Writer and the Readers (vv.1-2).

The names and descriptive phrases Peter used in this introduction to his letter are very important because they reveal to us the character of people who enjoy God’s peace while living in a chaotic world. The writer was Peter the servant and apostle. *Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ (v. 1a).*

The author of the letter identified himself as Simeon Peter. Simeon is the Hebraic form of Simon, which was the Greek name. Peter was the Greek name that Jesus gave to him. It means “rock.”

Jesus obviously intended for the name to be symbolic. Therefore, even by his self-introduction, Peter intended to emphasize the change that came about in his life. By calling himself by his original name, he reminds us that Jesus found him as an impetuous, self-willed, hard working fisherman. By attaching the name Peter, he reminds us that Jesus turned him into a trusting, faithful servant who experienced incredible peace with God.

Peter illustrated the change well. This is the man who sat quietly imprisoned between Roman soldiers ready to be executed the next day at Herod's command. This is the man who was executed by crucifixion shortly after he wrote this letter. He learned some important truths along the way and God intended for him to share these things with us.

Simeon Peter admitted that he is a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. He who was once the bold leader of others was now content to be known as servant of Jesus. Peter, who once cut off a man's ear in an attempt to protect Jesus, now considered himself to be a slave to Christ. Though he could have, Peter didn't use a word that refers to a household servant who exercised some freedom and had some rights. Rather, he saw himself as a slave who was owned by another. Peter put himself in the same category as other of God's servants who had gone before and demonstrated the servant's heart. Like Moses the great leader and law-giver who was first a slave of God (Deuteronomy 34:5). Like Joshua the brave general and conqueror who was first a slave of God (Joshua 24:25). Like David the warrior and king who was first a slave of God (2 Samuel 3:18). And like some of his peers who also understood their relationship to the Master Jesus. Now Peter was like Paul the brilliant Pharisee who became the foremost of evangelists but who was first a slave of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1). He was like Jude the physical brother of Jesus who never mentioned that fact but introduced himself as the slave of Jesus Christ (Jude 1).

He who had been the self-motivated and determined arranger of his life was now sent by Jesus. Peter was the natural leader of the disciples because he always had a plan. He planned to stand firm with Jesus while others might run away. He planned to be a significant member of Jesus' cabinet when He established Himself as King. If necessary, Peter planned to die with Jesus.

But something changed in that self-determined man. When the Holy Spirit regenerated Peter and indwelt him, Peter had a totally different perspective on life. Peter experienced death to self like all Christians experience. In time, Peter came to understand Jesus' promise about him. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go"* (John 21:18).

The kind of death to self that Peter demonstrated to us is a critical element of enjoying peace with God. Maybe a key to living in peace is to realize that the Master is actually responsible for much of the stuff we want to worry about. Everyone who has given up on trying to win salvation through his or her own merits ought to understand this idea of being owned by the Savior. If Jesus purchased us from the slave market of sin with His own blood, we are rightly His servants now.

We realize that we are not our own if we understand that accepting Jesus' ownership requires that we abandon the idea of self-ownership. Jesus said to many would-be followers, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it"* (Luke 9:23-24). Human wisdom rejects the idea of abandoning self will and identifying with the shame of Christ's cross. True servants of Jesus have learned that full identification with Christ is the path to enjoying the peace the Master gives.

Peter understood and demonstrated what it means to be a servant sent by Christ. He wrote to readers who were believers. *To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ (v.1b)*. Believers in Christ are people who have obtained faith. That is a foundational block in the larger truth that peace is found through obtaining faith. If that is true, it would seem that the more we believe, the more peace we should have. Therefore, if you are experiencing fear and anxiety, must be you just need to believe more or believe harder. "Believe what?" is the question. The important question is, "What is the object of your faith?"

Those who have peace have obtained the same faith the apostles and other Christians have. That is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That is to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh who took the sin of the world upon Himself, shed His blood to pay sin's penalty, and rose again in victory over death. That is asking a lot, because human nature really cannot believe that because it is too fantastic. Christ's person and work are incomprehensible, eclipsing finite reasoning. So how did the apostles and other Christians obtain this faith?

To obtain is to be allotted. The authors of the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament offer us a very useful definition of the word. *"To attain, usually by lot. Even where there is no casting of lots, the attainment is not by one's own effort or as a result of one's own exertions, but is like ripe fruit falling into one's lap."* Therefore, the word is used to describe the situation for Zacharias the priest who just happened to be in the temple when he received God's promise about John's birth, because by lot it just happened to be his turn. He didn't do anything to arrange the schedule. The schedule was arranged for him.

That is how we have obtained faith in Christ. The ability to fully trust Christ, to have faith, is not earned or gained or experienced by human effort. To believe in the person and work of Jesus is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is very important because salvation, which is the pathway and root to peace with God, which is resting in confidence toward our Master, is not gained through our own righteousness.

Peter explained that he, the other apostles, other Christians, the readers of this letter, and we who are saved all obtained faith through the righteousness of God. Righteousness is uprightness, justice, doing the right thing. This means that God is perfectly just to condemn sinners to eternal punishment for rebelling against Him and His law. God is perfectly just to provide the payment for the offenses of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ. God is perfectly just to require the sinner to believe in His provision for sin's covering. God is perfectly just to draw a sinner to this understanding and to give faith to believe.

This also means that God the Son, Jesus Christ, was righteous in carrying out the Godhead's plan for salvation. He laid aside His equality with God while He came to earth to fulfill righteousness. He

identified with humanity's sin in order to fulfill righteousness. And so, Jesus' statement to John who resisted baptizing Jesus does not surprise us. *But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* Jesus' entire ministry and work of atonement was an ongoing process of being righteous. The result is that we have peace with our Master because God our Savior **who is** Jesus Christ acted righteously.

All of that serves as laying the foundation upon which the letter writer's desire for the readers stands. Peter's desire: *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (v.2).* Notice that Peter desired the multiplication of grace and peace. How can grace and peace be multiplied? It starts when we initially receive grace and peace at salvation. We experience conviction of sin against God because God is gracious to convict us. We believe that Jesus' sacrifice is the payment for our sin because of God's grace. We experience the miracle of regeneration as God the Holy Spirit creates us anew by grace.

At last, because of God's grace, we also experience peace with God. We no longer fear God's wrath because of our sin against Him. We no longer are plagued by guilt because He has graciously sent our guilt away. We look forward to living with Him forever.

Even better news is that we continue to experience the peace and grace that God gives in increasing levels. The more we learn about God, the more we comprehend the incredible depth and breadth of His grace. The more we understand God's grace, the greater and deeper the peace we have with Him. Trusting what we learn about God results in multiplied peace.

Therefore, we conclude with Peter that great peace comes through the knowledge of God. Thinking in the context of when Peter wrote this letter, there is likely an important contrast on the surface. The Gnostics (false teachers) taught that peace came through initiation into deeper knowledge. Because they sought peace through human wisdom and effort, they experienced only the peace the world can give. This false teaching was already showing up in the churches by the time Peter wrote this letter.

Maybe some Christians who read Peter's letter needed to be reminded that real peace does come through knowledge of God. To people like that and like us comes the expression of a wonderful

desire: *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (v.2)*. True knowledge of God reveals that He is one God in three persons. Human wisdom will never come to that conclusion because it cannot. True knowledge of God reveals that Jesus Christ, who is our Master, is rightly our Master because He is God our Creator.

Jesus rightly owns us not only because He bought us with His blood but because He created us. *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17)*. To know our Creator through experience brings peace and confidence.

Think back to when you learned to drive a car. It is likely that some of you were a bit intimidated by the thought of being responsible to control a 250 h.p., turbo-charged, ton and a half piece of equipment that is capable of speeds over 150 m.p.h. You might have felt like you were taking a lethal weapon in your hands. You were. But now after many years of experienced driving various models of these lethal weapons you are quite at ease in the driver's seat. In fact, you might well be too at peace with the car. You have so much peace in your relationship now that you speed down the road at 60 m.p.h. texting on your cell phone or chit-chatting with fellow passengers as though there was no danger at all. In a way, that is the peace we learn to experience through knowledge of God. How do we get that knowledge?

Instruction for enjoying peace (vv.3-4).

We can know peace with God because God's power gives life through knowledge. *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence (v.3)*. Notice the promise that, through His power, God grants to us everything that leads to life and godliness. The gift is life and godliness.

When God gives us the gift, He gives us everything that pertains to life as He intends for it to be. What kind of life is that? God

intended for life to be eternal. Adam's sin destroyed that and put life on death row. Eternal life is not only endless life but life patterned after the eternal. God has given us all that we need in order to live an eternal-kind of life.

Also, when God gives us the gift, He gives us everything necessary for a God-kind of life. God created us in His image. We are supposed to reflect God's person and character. That is the meaning of godliness. Sin disrupted God's plan, so that the created being no longer reflects godliness. By nature we reflect Satan's influence of pride and self-centeredness. Through salvation God restores our capacity to reflect Him. Now we learn that God has already given us everything we need to be restored to God's original intent in life. We can live a life that reflects God.

The source behind this amazing gift is divine power. Divine power is the ability and the authority to do what "Divinity" determines should be done. Divinity is a reference to the work of God the Father and God the Son in particular (in this letter) and implies the work of the God the Holy Spirit (not mentioned specifically in this letter). The exercise of divine power means that there is nothing in life that can possibly curtail or destroy all the information that God has given to us to help us live to reflect His glory.

The treasures of God's grace are discovered by knowing Him. God called us to His own glory and excellence. He is carrying out His plans for each one of us by calling us to Himself. But God does not call us alongside Himself with no plan for us to change. He calls us to be conformed to His glory and excellence. This is the effectual, irresistible call to salvation.

Furthermore, God calls us to Himself because He desires for us to be knowing Him. Knowledge of God begins when He calls us. Knowledge of God continues to grow as we walk in fellowship with Him. Okay. That is wonderful news. But how do we gain the knowledge of God? Is it kind of magical like the Gnostics taught?

Knowledge about God is gained through the Word of God. Through His divine power God *has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (v.4)*. By God's glory and excellence

(another way of describing His divine power), He has also granted us amazing promises.

Here we discover that the “all things that pertain to life and godliness” that God has given to us is His Word. God has gifted us with precious and great promises. The verb *granted* (same as v.3) means to give as a gift. God gave this gift in the past and it has continuing ramifications throughout life. The valuable and surprising huge promises is a reference to the Bible.

In fact, the Bible is the central focus of Peter’s instruction about experiencing spiritual growth and peace. The traits of spiritual maturity listed in vv. 5-9 are stated and explained in various places in the Bible. We make certain our calling and election by knowing Bible truths (vv.10-12). Peter was determined to leave his people with Bible truths (vv.13-15). Peter and the apostles did not teach lessons from clever human wisdom but taught the Bible which is more reliable than the vision of Christ’s glory on the mount of Transfiguration (vv.16-21). Through reading and studying the Bible, we come to know God more and better.

And even more amazing is that through God’s promises we become partakers of the divine nature. As Peter wrote, *So that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature (v.4b)*. By reading and conforming to the truth of the Bible, we virtually share in God’s nature. It is a process in which we begin to reflect the person and character of God. Hmmmmm! That was God’s plan from the beginning, wasn’t it? Do you think that sharing in God’s very nature might result in a peaceful life?

That is precisely the case because through God’s promises we have already escaped the chaos of our sinful world. We not only become partakers of the divine nature, but *having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (v.4c)*. Sinful desires (our natural condition) cause corruption. Corruption is the dissolution, deterioration of the world. The laws of entropy prove that everything about life is winding down. There is no new energy being created. As a result of these “laws” of sin, physical life deteriorates, which robs us of peace. In a similar way, social order goes through the cycle of new society, sin impacts the new society, with the result that the society becomes corrupt and disappears like all the societies

before it. No peace there. But the truth of the Bible gives us escape from the corruption of the world. That is peace.

The conclusion we keep arriving at in this series about having peace while living in a chaotic world is two-fold: If you want to have peace in your heart, read your Bible. If you want to have peace in your heart, fellowship with God through prayer. In the words of Peter’s instruction: If you want to have peace in your heart, be a partner in God’s nature.