Studies in First Peter

John Williams

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Salvation (1 Peter 1:1-21)

INTRODUCTION: One of the recurring themes of this first chapter is "Salvation" (5, 9, 10). Notice the tenses of Salvation, past (2, 10), present (9), future (5). Consider this emphasis against the background of Peter's own life ("Lord, save me!" Matt. 14:30) and preaching (Acts 2, Acts 10, etc.). "Salvation" in Scripture tends to progress from physical deliverance to spiritual emancipation.

I. The Plan of Salvation. v 1-2.

- The writer; the readers (vocation, location, "dual citizenship").

- Peter sees things in perspective: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

- The Trinity involved: Father = Author who conceives the plan; Son = Agent who effects; Spirit = Executor who applies.

- Note the purpose of election.

II. The Nature of Salvation. v 3-9.

(a) A Living Hope — cf. v 13 ("expectation").

- Its source — Mercy of God.

- Its ground — Resurrection.

- Its content — "an inheritance" (4); "the revelation" of Christ (7, 13).

- Its beneficiaries: "begotten", "kept".

(b) A Genuine Faith — vs 5, 7, 9 (8).

- The Proof of faith 5, 7.

- The Value of faith 7.

- The End (goal) of faith 7, 9.

- The Object of faith 8.

(c) A Faithful Love v 8.

III. The Prophecy of Salvation. v 10-12.

Peter speaks often about the place and importance of Scripture (1:23-25, 2:6-8, 2 Pet. 1:19-21, 2:21-22, 3:15-16).

- The Inspiration of the "Prophets" — Note their research subsequent to their prophecy.

- The Revelation to the Prophets: Re the Cross, subsequent glories, and that they ministered for future generations. (Suggests the importance of O.T. to-day.)

- The Proclamation of the Word by "inspired" Preachers. v 12.

IV. The Evidence of Salvation v 13-17.

These verses stress the need for holy living.

(a) The Road to Holiness: Right thinking ... attitude ... perspective.

(b) The Nature of Holiness — Obedience 14.

- Separation from Sin 14.

- Imitation of Christ 15-16.

- Reverence 17 (God as Father Judge).

- Pilgrim attitude v 17 (v 1).

V. The Cost of Salvation v 18-21.

(a) The Person Who Redeemed Us: "Messiah", "Lamb", "foreordained", "manifest".

(b) The Price of Redemption: "precious blood" (N.B. contrasts).

(c) The Purpose of Redemption v 20-21.

(d) The Sequel: Resurrection Glory.

(John Williams)

Pictures of the Christian Life (1 Peter 1:22 – 2:10)

INTRODUCTION.

- Series of illustrations of the Christian life.

- cp. the "House of the Interpreter" (John Bunyan).

- Peter is emphasizing responsibility.

- nursery, architecture, the Tabernacle, Hosea.

I. New-born Babies. 1:22 – 2:3.

Familiar picture (N.T.); regeneration: family etc.

(a) Miracle of the New Birth.

(i) Fact — "Having been begotten again" (perfect tense) (23) — cf. John 3; 2 Cor. 5:17 (new).

(ii) Method — "in your obedience to the truth" (22), i.e. faith, trust. cf. John 3:36. Faith = submission to God's will.

(iii) Means — Word of God: "incorruptible seed" (cf. human birth). Things said about the Bible: "incorruptible seed", "Word of God"; "liveth, abideth"; "eternal"; "proclaimed in the Gospel".

(iv) Evidences — Purity (22); unfeigned fervent love (22); Renunciation of sin (malice, deceit, pretence, envy, evil speaking).

(b) Secret of Spiritual Growth.

(i) Cultivate an appetite 2:2 — not instinctive; needs developing.

(ii) Watch your diet sheet — "sincere milk of the Word", or better: "spiritual milk which is without guile" — same word as Rom. 12:1.

- We need the undiluted, unadulterated milk for growth.

- "grow unto salvation" means maturity.

II. Living Stones in a Spiritual House 2:4-8.

- "Living Stones" (paradox!) by union with the "Living Stone".

- N.B. independence and interdependence; purpose.

- Beautiful revelation of Christ as Pre-eminent:

(a) Living — life-giver.

(b) Rejected (by men).

(c) Chosen (by God).

(d) Precious (to the believer).

- Significance of O.T. quotations: Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14.

- A Spiritual House — i.e. the church. cf. 1 Cor. 3:9, 17 (indwelt by the Spirit).

- "be ye built up" (imperative), i.e. fit in with God's plan.

III. Royal Priests.

- "Holy" (5), "Royal" (9) Priesthood (Calling and Character).

- Priesthood of all believers (relates to work and worship).

- Best understood against O.T. background.

- "spiritual sacrifices" (cf. Hebs. 13): Prayer, Praise, Practical Christianity.

IV. A Holy Nation. 2: v 9-10.

- Peter takes expressions originally applied to Israel (Is. 43:20; Mal. 3:17; Ex. 19:6; Hosea 1:6-10; 2:23) and applies them to the Church.

- Note contrasts and purpose of God 9.

- Electing Grace and Redeeming Love.

Christian Responsibilities (1 Peter 2:11-25)

INTRODUCTION. Having spoken of our privileges, Peter now goes on to point out our responsibilities, particularly as members of society. These principles of Christian conduct are still applicable in to-day's world.

I. Our Relationship to the World. v 11-12. ("in it but not of it") Summed up in four words.

(a) "Sojourners" (11) — landed immigrant, a foreigner without citizen rights.

- cf. Israel in Egypt. Acts 13:17; Phil. 3:20.

- Christians have "dual citizenship".

(b) "Pilgrims" (11) — (emphasizes direction and goal).

- cf. Patriarchs — Heb. 11:13, "strangers and pilgrims".

- Separation, not isolationism.

(c) "Abstainers" (11) — "from fleshly lusts".

- "flesh" = unrestrained human nature apart from God.

- cf. Gals. 5:19-21 (not just physical) — an ugly catalog.

- N.B. imagery of "battle"; cf. Roms. 7, Eph. 6, Jas. 4:1.

(d) Witnesses (12) — works rather than words ("converted conduct") (Matt. 5:16) — silence slander by goodness. (Why were Christians slandered?)

- "day of visitation" — times of plague, famine, tragedy etc.

II. Right Attitudes v 13-19 (Note Summary in verse 17).

Key = Motivation: "for the Lord's sake" (i.e. because you are a Christian).

(a) Submission: 13-14.

(i) Government (federal, "local") (Supreme and subordinate). Literally: "every divine institution among men".

- Peter views society (includes rulers at all levels) as ordered by God.

- Note purpose of authority in society (moral and physical wellbeing).

- Are there limits on "submission"? e.g. if rulers fail in this purpose; or Acts 5:29.

- Christianity vs. anarchy. Roms. 13:1, 1 Tim. 2:2, etc.

- What is "submission" in a democratic society? (cf. authoritarian, totalitarian).

(ii) "Employer" 18.

- Slavery had special problems for Christians but teaching is clear.

- Response not arbitrary (see Philemon).

- Can this be applied to contemporary labour/ management?

(b) Well doing. 15 — our highest social duty.

- Result: "muzzles" ignorant people.

(c) Freedom but to serve 16.

- Freedom to, not freedom from (freedom has limits).

- Christianity vs. license (cf. Roms. 6).

(d) Grace 19-20.

- Patience in the face of undeserved suffering.

III. The Example of Christ. v 20-25 (undeserved suffering).

(a) The Subjective side of the Atonement (O.T. background).

- "Example" (copy-line); "follow closely his steps".

- Not "imitation of Christ". (Note: "who did no sin" — Peter's comment!)

- See v 24: Identification with Christ.

(b) The Objective side of the Atonement (Christ's death).

- Voluntary (24)

- Sacrificial (23)

- Vicarious (24)

- Saving (24)

Note the important O.T. quotations: Isaiah 53 (Passover, Scapegoat, etc.).

(c) Christ the Shepherd (and the overseer).

(John Williams.)

Christian Marriage (1 Peter 3:1-7)

INTRODUCTION: In this section of his epistle Peter, himself a married man, offers practical advice to Christian husbands and wives. The New Testament is firmly committed to constancy in marriage and disciplined family life (cf. contemporary ideas).

I. Counsel to Wives. v 1-6.

(a) Exhortation and encouragement.

- "Likewise", i.e. the same spirit exemplified in ch. 2.

- Context envisages Christian wife and pagan husband; wider application.

(i) Submission.

- Not subjugation, nor inferiority.

- Accept God-given roles — 1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:23.

- Purposeful submission: to husband for Christ.

- cf. "The Word" — "without a word": eloquent silence.

- Are there limits? — e.g. Acts.

(ii) Purity.

- "Chaste behaviour" — gives no ground for suspicion.

- cf. Titus 2:3-5 (undefiled). Difficulty of N.T. times society.

(iii) Reverence (the tone of life).

- People are watching. We must live with reverence for God.

(iv) Right sense of values. (A "Christian Charm" course):

- Negative side: not expensive coiffures, lavish extravagance.

- Positive side: inward rather than outward ("hidden") — incorruptible apparel; meek and quiet spirit (of value to God).

(b) Examples.

Holy women of past generations, e.g. Sarah.

- Characteristics: "hoped in God", chose inward adorning, subject to husbands, e.g. Sarah accepted Abraham's headship.

- Spiritual descendants characterized by calm, poise, courage etc.

II. Counsel to Husbands. v 7.

Why so much space for "I" and so little for "II"?

- a. Faithfulness (result of love, cf. Eph. 5:25). (N.B. reciprocity) v. Divorce etc.

- b. Considerateness — "knowledge" — share domestic responsibilities.

- c. Courtesy: honour, chivalry: weaker / inferior.

- d. Complementariness: "heirs together" — spiritual equality, each for the other.

- e. Communion — pray together (hindrances).

(John Williams)

The Lordship of Christ (1 Peter 3:8-22)

INTRODUCTION. Having dealt with specific areas of life — e.g. society, work, family — Peter now offers a more general Christian ethic. He stresses the importance of a "good conscience" and reminds his readers of the importance of the Resurrection. The key phrase: "Christ as Lord" v 15 (Compare Phil. 2:1-4).

I. Behaviour in Relation to Fellow Christians v 8-11.

(a) Unity.

- Unanimity, not uniformity.

- Cultivate common interest on basis of Scripture. "In essentials unity; in non-essentials charity — in all things love."

- cf. Phil. 2:2, 4:2; Ephesians 4:3-4.

(b) Sympathy (compassion).

- Jesus' complaint about His generation — Matt. 11:16-18.

- cp. 2 Cor. 1:4 — Sympathy born of suffering.

(c) Brotherly love.

- Important in N.T.: a matter of Obedience — John 13:34, 15:12.

- Evidence of Salvation — 1 John 3:14-15.

- Witness to the world — John 13:35.

(d) Tenderheartedness.

- Strange word in Greek: means "strong bowelled".

- The "physiology" of feeling.

- A Christ-like virtue (cf. Eph. 4:32).

- Christians often afraid of expressing their feelings.

(e) Humility.

- A characteristically Christian virtue — Matt. 11:29.

- See Phil. 2:1-3; 1 Peter 5:6. "apron of humility".

II. Behaviour in Relation to a Non-Christian World. v 9-17.

(a) Forgiving (not vindictive) spirit: positive steps: "blessing".

- "coals of fire" Rom. 12:20; cf. Matt. 5:44, Eph. 4:32.

- Quote Ps. 34:12-16. Guard your words and deeds.

- God is watching (cf. Hagar).

(b) Zeal for goodness (may involve suffering).

(c) Confidence (not anxiety).

(d) Alertness (to witness). N.B. "Christ as Lord".

III. The Triumph of Christ. v 18-22.

(a) His Death.

- Sacrificial — "for sins".

- Sufficient — "once for all".

- Substitutionary — "righteous for unrighteous".

- Saving — "bring us to God" (reconciliation).

(b) His Resurrection.

- "quickened by the Spirit" (or "in spirit" R.V.).

- Note about "spirits in prison" (two main interpretations).

- Noah's household saved "through" or "by" water.

- Flood (type), Baptism (antitype), Work of Christ (Archetype).

- Not "baptismal regeneration" — cf. v 21b: N.B. "inquiry".

(c) His Ascension.

"Jesus Christ is Lord".

(John Williams)

"This Is Your Life" (1 Peter 4:1-19)

INTRODUCTION: In this searching chapter Peter exhorts his readers to discover and do the Will of God. This will involve suffering and misunderstanding. The Christian will be supported by the Holy Spirit and encouraged by the expectation of a "bright tomorrow".

I. Living in the Will of God. v 1-2.

- Mystical union with Christ in his death is the secret of spiritual victory.

- "suffered for us in the flesh" = died (cf. 3:18).

- Need for "reckoning" — attitude and intent of mind v 2.

- A battle — need for "spiritual rearmament".

- Continued and deliberate choice between "the Will of God" or "the lust of the flesh". Roms. 6:11.

II. Living in the Flesh. v 3-6.

- Sometimes good to look back (gratefully!).

- An unpleasant catalog of evil.

- Separation, ostracism, misunderstanding inevitable.

- You cannot escape God for ever! (5)

- v 6 (Difficult). Probably means: even Christians who have died (physically) have not escaped the consequence of sin (death) but they have escaped the final judgment.

III. Living as Good Stewards v 7-11.

- Thoughts of the future affect the present (cf. 1 John 2:28, 3:3).

(a) Personal virtues: v 7 — Balance (sound mind); Sobriety; Prayerfulness.

(b) Social virtues: v 8 — fervent and forgiving love; (disinterested) hospitality (love of strangers).

- Christian stewardship: N.B. charisma (gift); "variegated" grace (charis) of God (cp. 1:6).

- Oral and practical.

- Resources and motivation.

- Doxology.

IV. Living as a "Christian" v 12-19.

- The refining process of suffering.

- Sharing Christ's suffering and glory.

- The Spirit's strength promised.

- Deserved or undeserved suffering.

- The sifting of divine judgment.

- A "Faithful Creator".

(John Williams)

"God Cares" (1 Peter 5:1-14)

INTRODUCTION: In this concluding chapter of his letter, Peter makes a final appeal to fellow Christian leaders and to all the people of God. He is particularly concerned to emphasize right motivation and proper perspective. Whatever their present experiences, their future is assured.

1. The Chief Shepherd is returning. v 1-4.

Peter's appeal as a fellow elder, as an eye witness of Christ's suffering, as a sharer of future glory.

A. The Responsibilities of Elders (Presbyteroi).

(i) To tend the flock ("to shepherd" and to oversee — episkopountes).

(ii) To live exemplary lives.

B. The Right Motive of Elders.

(i) Willingness to serve.

(ii) Desiring to "give" rather than "get".

(iii) Recognizing divine stewardship.

(iv) Anticipating the "Chief Shepherd".

C. The Reward for an Elder.

"amaranthine crown".

2. Keys to Successful Christian Living. v 5-9.

(i) Attitude toward God.

- Submission to His will (6).

- Recognition of His Sovereignty and Grace (6, 7, 10).

(ii) Attitude toward others.

- gracious submission

- respect for seniority

- unselfish service.

(iii) Attitude to self.

- Humility.

- Freedom from anxiety.

- Faith in a God who cares.

- Sobriety and vigilance.

(iv) Attitude toward evil.

- identify the real enemy.

- resist Satan in faith.

- recognize you are not alone.

3. Glory to God! v 10-11.

- Benediction and Doxology.

- The Call of God (and purpose).

- Suffering can be a blessing, under God.

4. A Fond Farewell. v 12-14.

- Silvanus (or Silas), Peter's amanuensis.

- "She that is in Babylon" — pseudonym for Church at Rome.

- Mark, special friend of Peter.

- A final "catholic" greeting.

(John Williams.)