

1 Peter 1:3-9 – St Botolph’s Sunday 6 November 2016

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Peter’s first Epistle is addressed to the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. One commentator suggests that geographically speaking this would be 300,000 square miles!

It is written to a group of believers who are going through a hard time. They have been scattered; they are being persecuted for their faith. So Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes a letter of encouragement to show them that God has a purpose for their sufferings and trials and for the trouble which will come their way.

In I Peter 1:3-9, Peter encourages these Christians by telling them that God has made provision for them to help them survive what they are about to face. God supplies the provisions necessary for surviving life in the real world. Peter tells them that there are four different supplies that God has given us to help us survive life in the real world.

First is hope; hope is the key theme in I Peter. Peter is attempting to give these believers hope for the future in spite of their current sufferings. The hope that Peter is writing about is the hope of salvation. It’s not a hope that is in doubt similar to, when we’re told there’s an 80% chance of rain and we hope it doesn’t rain. The hope that Peter is talking about is more a conviction of faith.

Peter describes this hope as a living hope. Our hope in salvation and eternal life rests in Jesus. Jesus died and was buried, but was raised to life and now lives. Peter is able to testify to this on a first hand basis. He saw the empty tomb with his own eyes and he saw Jesus after he had been resurrected. Our hope for eternal life rests in Christ and it is a living hope because Christ himself is alive.

We all know the saying “where there’s life, there’s hope”. As humans, we live on hope. It feeds us, it keeps us going from day to day. It gives us something to look forward to, something better to grab hold of. When we hear the tragedy of people committing suicide, it’s often because they don’t have any hope. They can’t see any light at the end of the tunnel. Nothing’s going to get any better in their mind. We all need hope. God has provided us with a living hope, hope for eternity, in the form of his Son, Jesus.

Secondly, Peter says in verse four, God has provided for each one of us an invaluable inheritance. No matter what we may lose in this life, may it be riches, homes, loved ones, or our very lives; we will gain a great inheritance in heaven.

Peter is painting a picture of the Israelites here and identifying these Christians with the Israelites. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years, sustained by the promise of their inheritance, the Promised Land that God had told them was theirs. This inheritance Peter tells us is, “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away”. No one can take away our inheritance of eternal life with Christ. As a Christian, we are members of God’s family and heirs to the inheritance that God has kept for us.

Thirdly, Peter tells us that our faith is of greater worth than gold. It’s precious, it’s valuable. Our faith in God is what really sustains us throughout our lives and especially in troubling times. In verse seven we read that our faith is compared to gold, in that fire itself does not destroy gold but removes the impurities from it. Likewise, our faith is put to the fire during times of trial and as the impurities of our faith are removed, our faith is made stronger. Times of trial and suffering strengthen our faith by removing our pride and dependence on ourselves and forcing us to trust in God even more and draw closer to Him.

To illustrate this here is a story from the recent hurricane that hit Haiti, it is Rose’s story. Seventy year-old Rose lives alone in St Jean du Sud, Haiti – her husband died in 1997. However, Rose loves her home by the sea, even though making ends meet is tough, she says: ‘I don’t have anything – I can’t work because I have been ill, so God is my everything.’ Rose recalls the night Hurricane Matthew struck her town last month: ‘It started raining at 10pm. At 4am, the house starting shaking, and by 5am, everything was destroyed. My roof just flew off with no warning!’

She decided that there was only one thing she could still do. ‘All my neighbours gathered together outside – there was nothing we could do but pray.’ As the rain beat down and the winds slammed into her house, they stayed huddled together. ‘We thought we were going to die, but said to ourselves “if one of us is going to die, then we would all die together” But God was our rescuer.’

That night, Rose and her neighbours lost their livelihoods – their gardens, trees, food and homes. In spite of all this, Rose remains thankful: ‘Everything which gives us life is gone, but God has given me the breath of life, so I thank God for

that. It is by the grace of God that I am alive.’ In the face of such adversity Rose continues to have an unshakable faith in God and his ability to provide for her.

Peter describes this faith in verse eight saying, “Christ, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” That describes Rose and us. We have a precious faith from God and in God that is made stronger through times of suffering in our lives.

Fourthly, Peter tells us our faith provides inexpressible joy. God has provided us with a living hope, an invaluable inheritance and a precious faith which produces in us an inexpressible joy. Why? Because we know that God loves us and we have nothing to fear because we have a certain hope for eternal life.

As Christians, there should be a smile on our faces so wide that people will wonder what is wrong with us. We should have joy in our hearts and in our lives because as Peter says in verse nine we are, “receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.” This type of joy is contagious. It’s infectious. Others want to know why we possess that much joy. We can tell them that it’s because God sent his Son to die on the cross for our sins. We’re forgiven and not only that but after Jesus died, God raised him back to life and he has promised to do the same for us.

God has provided the provisions necessary for surviving life in the real world. As Christians, we possess these four things that will help us make it through life’s ups and downs: A living hope, an invaluable inheritance, a precious faith, and an inexpressible joy. These will carry us through life’s trials. In Jesus’ name. Amen.