

The Message of the Book of 1 Peter by Bob Young

Introduction

Peter wrote his first letter to Christians in exile who were undergoing persecutions. It is hard to maintain faith in the midst of a hostile world. Suffering often leads to fear, and fear can easily take control. Peter wrote to Christians in difficult circumstances.

The textual construction in 2:11-12 is often identified as the hinge in 1 Peter, even though the first chapter and a half are no more than one-third of the book. Peter writes to encourage first century Christians who have been scattered because of their faith to stand firm in the true grace of God (5:12). The recipients of the letter had been scattered, persecuted, and maligned. They, and we, are encouraged to set our hope on God's grace. In the grace of God there is hope and encouragement for all who hurt. In the grace of God there is faith and hope that empowers genuine love.

The book encourages the readers by reminding them of their living hope based on what Christ has done, their strange life in the present world, and the difficulties which remain before them. One author described these as a living hope through Christ's resurrection, a calm hope through submission, and a firm hope through faith. The book informs, exhorts, and comforts. Christians need a faith that will help them to go on, to stand firm, and to rejoice. In this letter is information for Christian living. In one sense, what precedes 2:11-12 is foundation; the rest of the book is application.

Following are some helps and outlines to assist in the development of classes and sermons based on 1 Peter.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

What do you know with certainty? Can you see beyond the present? Do you know who you are? Whose you are? Why you are? Most Christians can benefit from remembering what we already know about ourselves. After all, what we do is a result of what we think. But especially in our contemporary society, it is easy to so emphasize the doing that we forget the thinking. The beginning point is in thinking correctly about ourselves.

An interesting sermon or class series based on 1 Peter could focus on various descriptions of the people of God. Peter does not use the term "church" to describe Christians in this book, but the connection is not difficult to establish based on 2:1-5. Consider the following.

- The Church: People who are Chosen (1:1-12)
- The Church: People who are Holy (1:13-21)
- The Church: People who Love (1:22-25)
- The Church: People who are Living (2:4-10)
- The Church: People who are Counter-cultural (2:11-25)
- The Church: People who are Submissive (3:1-17)
- The Church: People who are Spiritual (3:18-4:6)
- The Church: People who Serve (4:7-11)
- The Church: God's Glorious People (4:12-5:7)
- The Church: God's Steadfast People (5:8-11)

Another possibility for a single class or sermon is to show that the church is composed of people who are (1) covenant people, (2) holy, (3) chosen, (4) separate or distinct, (4) authentic, (5) suffering, (6) changed, and (7) eternal.

HOW CHRISTIANS LIVE

This sermon deals with 1:1-2:11.

2:11ff; we are strangers and pilgrims (include specific word studies). This is how we say it, but what is the practical application?

What are your greatest fears? A few years ago in an adult Bible class, I asked that question as we prepared for a study of 1 Peter. The responses were revealing. How can we overcome fear? We will find insights and help in the first part of 1 Peter.

I. WE RESTRAIN IMMORALITY IN A CORRUPT WORLD

We are called to holiness, to be like God, so set your hope on grace.

Prepare minds for action

be self controlled

Do not conform to this world and ignorance

live by belief in God

purify by obeying truth

II. WE REMAIN TOGETHER IN A DIVISIVE WORLD

We are called to love, togetherness, like-mindedness, set your affections on one another.

Faith and hope precede love, 1:21.

Four reminders

We are children of the same father

We take our instruction from the same source

We have our struggles in the same realm

We focus our attentions on the same objectives

III. WE RETAIN IDENTITY IN A PAGAN WORLD--BECAUSE OF WHO AND WHOSE WE ARE

Can we really expect to live in holiness, to be like God, and like Christ?

- A. Remember God's appraisal of us. Jer. 29:11; Ps. 103:1-5, 11-14; Lam 3:25; Col. 1:12-14; Jas 1:17-18; Rom. 8:31-39.
 1. We are living stones in the same house as the living stone
 2. We are royal, holy priests in the same temple
 3. We have been chosen as participants, part of a people sharing the same promise
 4. We are part of a nation sharing the same citizenship and covenants, Phil. 3:20.
 5. We are owned by the same owner, possessed by the same power.

Illustration: the value of common things is enhanced if owned by someone important or significant. Lincoln's book, Churchill's memoirs, Beethoven's handwritten music, a house once owned by another. What of something owned by God?

- B. Whose we are.
 1. We are God's own possession.
 - a. We belong to God
 - b. We declare his praises, virtues, imitate that virtue
 2. We are God's called people, from darkness to light
 3. We are God's people who have received mercy

Conclusion

Therefore we live in this world as strangers and aliens, travelers in a strange world, not at home, living in a foreign country, with language and customs different than ours. We do not share the culture.

This is a call to exemplary living that glorifies God. This is the nature of the church; this is the calling of all who wear the name of Christ. No other option exists. No dual citizenship is allowed, nor

is such desired. Christ is our all in all. He is enough. We exist spiritually in the same house, temple, promise, covenant, power. We are his and that awareness guides our every action and life decision. The challenges of the contemporary culture do not overwhelm us; we live a strange life here, confident that thereby we will be equipped for whatever the future may hold. Our faith is described in 1 Pet. 5:10-11.

I pray this is also your faith, I declare good news; this faith can be yours as you answer his call and find his righteousness declared yours in the obedience of faith, turning from this world, and dying to that world in obedient baptism.