

1 PETER

1 PETER 1:1-12 — THE LIVING HOPE

The opening of this epistle reminds us of Paul in its salutation, verses 1-2. Here we have the author's name — Peter, his official designation — an apostle of Jesus Christ, and a characterization and location of the people addressed — "strangers scattered throughout" the provinces of Asia Minor named. This last phrase is rendered in the Revised Version, "sojourners of the dispersion," which indicates that they were chiefly Jewish Christians not at home in their own land. But nevertheless, they were at home with God, for they are spoken of as "elect," or chosen ones, and it is interesting to note the operation of the Three Persons of the Godhead in their election — the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The first, called them, the second redeemed them, the third satisfied or set them apart for God forever.

The salutation is followed, as also in Paul's epistles, by the thanksgiving (vv. 3-12), which contains as well a statement of the theme of the epistle which is, The Living Hope. Seven things are told us of the Living Hope:

1. Its source, "the abundant mercy of God";
2. Its ground, the new birth, "begotten again";
3. Its means, "the resurrection of Jesus Christ," involving His death, of course;
4. Its nature, "an inheritance," etc.;
5. Its security, "reserved" for us, "who are kept" for it;
6. Its consummation "in the last time," which as is shown later, means not the end of the world, but of the present age which synchronizes with the Second Coming of Christ;
7. Its effect, joy, "wherein ye greatly rejoice." This rejoicing is experienced even in the midst of trial (v. 6), because that trial will redound to our "praise, and honor and glory" at Christ's Second Coming.

"The end of your faith" (v. 9), means that at which faith aims or in which it results, which the apostle says the believer is now "receiving," now bearing

off as a prize in the present earnest of the Spirit he enjoys, in the present peace of reconciliation, in his growing sanctification and eager anticipation of eternal joy.

The closing part of this section (vv. 9-12) is a strong declaration of the supernatural character of the Holy Scriptures. The "salvation" just referred to had been prophesied of in the Old Testament, concerning which its writers had sought and searched diligently. That for which they searched was the time of the sufferings and subsequent glory of Christ. The Holy Spirit had led them to write of that time, and now the same Spirit revealed into them the meaning of what they had written. He instructed them that they had written not for their own age but this age, when that which they had written was being preached in the demonstration of the same Holy Spirit (v. 12). We thus see that the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, reveals their meaning, and accompanies their preaching and teaching, or else that preaching or teaching is in vain.

QUESTIONS

1. Give the details of the salutation.
2. Who are meant by strangers here?
3. What is the theme of the epistle?
4. Name the seven things spoken of it.
5. Explain verse 9.
6. What threefold relation does the Holy Spirit bear to the Holy Scriptures?

1 PETER 1:12-2:10 — OBLIGATIONS OF HOPE — UPWARD

"Wherefore" at the beginning of this lesson shows that as the result of what has gone before something is expected. They who have been begotten again to this living hope have obligations arising from it.

The first is Hope (vv. 13-16). The difference between "hope" in verse 13 and that in verse 3 is, that there it represented the believer's standing or position before God in Christ, and here his experience and exhibition of it. Having been begotten again unto a living Hope, he is now to hope for it

with all sobriety and concentration of mind. As he does so hope it will affect his character and conduct (v. 14), for no longer will his daily life be run in the mould of his former desires in sin, but will be holy as God is holy (vv. 15-16).

The second is Fear (vv. 17-21), godly fear, of course, not the fear of a criminal before a judge, but that of an obedient child in the presence of a loving father. Two motives are given for it, one, the thought of judgment (v. 17); the other, the cost of our redemption (vv. 18-19). The judgment is not to determine the question of salvation, which is settled for believers as soon as they accept Christ, but to determine their fidelity as disciples and the place of reward awaiting them in glory.

The third is Love (v. 22-2:3). Believers have "purified their souls," not in an absolute experimental sense, but in the judicial sense that they now have a right standing before God. This they did "in obeying the truth" of the Gospel, which they were enabled to obey "through the Spirit"; in other words, by the aid of the Holy Spirit. Being in this position they are able to "love one another," and being able to do it imposes the obligation to do it (v. 22). The thought is extended in the next verse which reveals that believers are "brethren" in that they have all been "born again" by the one "seed," which is the incorruptible Word of God. The "love" they are to exercise toward one another is defined in the opening verses of chapter 3, and in order to obtain the strength to exercise it they are to draw on the Word of God. That which instrumentally brought them into life will sustain them in it continually (vv. 2-3).

The fourth is Praise (vv. 4-10). The Lord Jesus Christ referred to in verse 3, is "a Living Stone," Whose life has been communicated to believers, making them "living stones" (v. 5). They thus form a spiritual temple, and, abruptly changing the figure, they are the "priesthood" in the temple. As such they have spiritual sacrifices to offer (v. 5), the chief of which is to "show forth the praises of Him Who" redeemed them (vv. 9-10).

These four obligations of The Living Hope are referred to as the "upward" ones in the sense that, with one exception, they are due to God directly. The exception is that of "Love" which is due to God indeed, but exercised indirectly through the brethren. The obligations following in the epistle are for the most part outward toward the world, and inward toward one another as fellow-believers, fellow-members of the family of God or of the Body of Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of "Wherefore"?
2. Name the four obligations in this lesson.
3. Why are they called upward?
4. What is the difference between "hope" in verse 5 and in verse 13?
5. What are the two motives for godly fear?
6. Expound in your own words 1:22-2:3.
7. Do the same with 2:4-10.

1 PETER 2:11-4:6 — OBLIGATIONS OF HOPE — OUTWARD

The writer had dropped his pen, but takes it up again at verse 11. To "abstain from fleshy lusts that war against the soul," is limited and defined in the next verse. The pagans round about were speaking against the Christians as evildoers. Their increasing numbers were emptying the Pagan temples, and threatening in so doing, not only the Pagan religion but the state itself, for the Romans worshipped the state in the person of the emperor, and at this time Rome controlled the world. The duty of the Christians, therefore, was to have their conduct so seemly and consistent in the eyes of their watchful and jealous neighbors that by their "good works," those neighbors might in the day of their visitation by divine grace glorify God for them.

There were two ways in which this seemliness was to show itself, or rather two obligations to be borne by the Christians toward the pagans, one was submission (2:13-3:7), and the other testimony (3:8-4:6).

The submission was comprehensive in scope, covering the three classes of the social order: governmental (vv. 13-17), industrial (vv. 18-25), conjugal (3:1-7).

The testimony was to be marked by four things: readiness, intelligence, meekness and consistency of life (3:15-16).

The last point calls for amplification because of some obscurity in the text that follows. It is the writer's desire all through the epistle to use the

example of Christ to enforce his exhortations. For example, in chapter 2 (vv. 18-25), household servants are urged to patience under even unjust treatment by their Pagan masters on the ground that when Christ "was reviled," He "reviled not again," "but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." And so here it is said that it is better to "suffer for well-doing than for evil doing" (v. 17). Why? Because Christ so suffered even unto death (v. 18), but was quickened and raised from the dead; and even more, has "gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (v. 22). We Christians should arm ourselves with the same mind" that He had (4:1). We, too, should be willing to suffer in the flesh. He who has this purpose in his heart "hath ceased from sin" in the sense indicated in verses 2-4; i.e., he will separate himself from all evildoers even if he suffer for it so far as his life in the flesh is concerned. There were some indeed, who had suffered even unto death (v. 6); but it was to this end that the Gospel had been preached to them while they were alive, that they might know that, though they were thus judged, thus treated according to the will of men as regards the flesh, yet they would live by the will of God as regards the spirit. And, or course, as Christ triumphed over His enemies and entered into glory, the same would be true of them.

A further difficulty appears at 3:19, where Christ in triumphing over His enemies is represented as preaching "unto the spirits in prison." "Preaching" here is not the word commonly used for preaching the gospel, but means "to herald" or "to proclaim." That which Christ heralded or proclaimed was His triumph over His enemies through the Cross (^{<S12B>}Colossians 2:13-15). "Spirits" presumably, does not refer to men but angels, the evil angels who "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation," "in the days of Noah." (See our comments on ^{<S10B>}Genesis 6:8, and compare also ^{<S11B>}2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7).

QUESTIONS

1. Explain 2:11-12.
2. Name the two "outward" obligations of The Living Hope.
3. Name the three kinds of submission enjoined.
4. In what four ways was the testimony to be marked?
5. Explain 4:1-6.

6. Explain 3:19-20.

1 PETER 4:7-5:14 — OBLIGATIONS OF HOPE — INWARD

HOSPITALITY (4:7-11)

by which we understand spiritual rather than physical hospitality, though the latter need not be excluded from the thought. Verses 10 and 11 for example, suggest 1 Corinthians 12; ~~<512B>~~ Romans 12:3-8; ~~<1017>~~ Ephesians 4:7-16, etc., in which Paul is teaching the duty of the members of the Body of Christ to minister to one another of their spiritual gifts without judging.

PATIENCE (4:12-19)

Verse 12 shows that the opposition to the Christians at this time was exhibited in more than a "speaking against" them as earlier passages record. "The fiery trial among you" is the rendering of the Revised Version — it was already there. Verse 13 is characteristic of Peter, who always throws forward the fact of the present suffering of Christians unto the light of their future glory, for which reason he is called the apostle of hope (see 1:3, 7, 11; 5:1, 4, 10). If Christians were unwilling to suffer for righteousness' sake it was an evidence of a low spiritual state. Let them remember therefore, that time of judgment he had referred to in 1:17.

FIDELITY (5:1-4)

In this instance "elders," in the sense of pastors are particularly addressed, when once more the heavenly glory is brought forward as a motive for their conduct.

SERVICE (5:5-11)

Elder in this instance has reference, not to office, but age. The younger members of the flock, and indeed all of them, are to gird themselves with humility "to serve one another" (RV). Fear should move them to do this, "for God resisteth the proud." The hope of reward should move them, for He "giveth grace to the humble," hence the exhortation of verse 6. It costs something to humble one's self. It makes us anxious about our possessions

or our position in life, but let us cast that anxiety upon God, for it is His business to care for us (v. 7). "It matters to Him about you," is a literal and beautiful rendering of that verse. But there is another reason for humbling ourselves in service — the activity of the evil one (vv. 8-9). It is he who would restrain us from doing it. Be watching out for him at such a time, resist him in the comfort of knowing that you are not alone in such experiences. Moreover, the conflict will not be for long, and glory follows (v. 10).

QUESTIONS

1. Name the four inward obligations of The Living Hope.
2. Define spiritual hospitality.
3. How is Peter sometimes designated, and why?
4. What motives should move us to serve once another?
5. Give a literal translation of ~~1~~ 1 Peter 5:7.