

2Peter 11-08-26a

This is Friday, the 26th of August, 2011. We continue our study in the book of 2 Peter tonight. We'll take a moment at the outset to focus our concentration, cultivate the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, and prepare ourselves for the study of God's Word, shall we pray? Father, we see your hand of mercy and provision and grace upon us over this past week as we have faced challenges and enjoyed blessings and navigated the circumstances of our daily lives.

We know that these things are necessary, that we are called to be pilgrims and sojourners on this earth in the time that remains to us after we have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for the privilege and the opportunity of learning and growing in grace as we tackle these issues and seek to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight. We thank you for the scriptures that have preserved your truth and guidance for us down through all of these many years and centuries.

And in the hands of the Holy Spirit, ministered to our hearts, we are thoroughly equipped for every good work through these wonderful doctrines and principles and promises that you have left for us. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ and his work on our behalf and the standing that we have in him before you. And we pray that as we study this portion of your Word tonight that God the Holy Spirit will make it meaningful and pertinent and applicable for each one of us so that we can reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus as we continue in what time remains to us in this life.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, you'll remember last time we began our study in the book of 2 Peter having finished the first letter of Peter.

And we know that the author is the Apostle Peter. He identifies himself as such in the first verse just as he did in his first epistle. And he says Simon Peter.

He gives both of his names. We know that he was born Simon or Simeon, which is Aramaic derived from Hebrew. And it is from the Hebrew verb Shammah, which is, by the way, the same root as Shmuel or Samuel.

This is a diminutive form of Samuel, really, without the L portion. And so this is sort of a New Testament version of that name, Simon or Simeon. You remember that the elderly gentleman who greeted the Lord Jesus upon his arrival as an infant in Jerusalem was also named Simeon.

And from Shammah, which means to hear, this means heard. God is heard or the hearing one. You remember Samuel, speak Lord for thy servant, heareth.

Hannah named him that because God had heard her prayers when she was barren. So there is a strong emphasis in that word on hearing. And when did he get the second half of his name, Peter? If Jesus was speaking Aramaic, as we think he almost certainly was on the occasion of

the transfiguration and Jesus asking the disciples, who do men say that I am? And they gave various answers.

They think that you're one of the prophets. Who do you say that I am? And Peter gives out the great confession. You are the Christ, the son of the living God.

And Jesus, based on that statement by this man, said you are Cephas. You are Cephas, which in Greek is Petras, which is little stone. And upon this Petra, which is a large rock, I will build my church.

The Petra is the great confession. It is the truth of who Jesus Christ is. He is the Messiah.

He is the anointed one. He is the Christ, the son of the living God. That is the foundation on which the church is built.

Contrary to our friends in the Catholic Church, the church is not built on Peter. It is not built on a man. It is built on the recognition.

Peter heard and understood the truth of God. And as we saw last time, there is a great emphasis on hearing, on taking in the truth of God's word. This is where we get knowledge.

How many times in this first chapter have we seen that word? Epinosus, epinosus, epinosus. Through knowledge, through knowledge, through knowledge. Well, how do you get that knowledge? He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.

And one of the reasons Peter is so well qualified to deliver the truth that is in this letter from God is he first heard it. He is the hearing one. He is the one that heard it himself, latched onto it, made it the object of his faith.

That is what qualifies him to speak. Believe it or not, this is what I would consider to be a somewhat overlooked truth in the church. We are so anxious to spread the word.

Much of the church latches onto the Great Commission as the focus and the emphasis. And of course, none of us would be saved if we had not heard the gospel. But the scriptural imperative, the scriptural priority is to first be a hearer.

Before we can communicate, before we can share, before we can effectively live out and reflect the truth of God and the glory of God, we have to be hearers before we are speakers. That's what Peter is. Shimeon, Simon.

And because he is a hearer, he partakes of that great Petra. He is a chip off of that block. You're Petras.

You are an embodiment of this great truth. And because you have heard it and because it's the object of your faith, Jesus says, you're now qualified to share it. So we saw last time that he says

he is addressing this to those who have obtained like precious faith.

Iso Timae. Remember that great word? It's like isometrics or isosceles or any other thing that's... Iso means the same and Timae is honored like Timothy's name. You've got like precious faith.

He says, I am Simon Peter. I am a doulos. I'm a bond slave of Jesus Christ.

I am also an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was a slave first. He was a servant first.

He was a follower first. He was a hearer first. And he became Petras, an embodiment and a reflection of the truth of Jesus Christ.

And he runs the gamut from doulos to apostolos. Because he was a hearer, now he can be a fourth teller. So it's a wonderful lesson just in his name.

And that's what he begins with. Simon Peter, a bond servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. Writing to those who have obtained, who have taken hold of.

And this is a really interesting word. We kind of went through the ideas last time and I'm going to do just a little bit of exegesis this time. This is not the usual word for receiving or laying hold of.

This word has the idea of something that is apportioned, something that is allocated. It was often used along with meros. Remember what meros is? Your part or your portion of an inheritance.

So those who have received their allotment of the faith, which is an interesting way to put it. We would think, well, there are those who would take a more passive idea. It took me a while to come up with that.

Who would understand it to mean that God gave us faith. You know, there's a place where they say, well, one of the gifts is faith. So God has allotted you a portion of the faith.

He gave you some faith, gave you some faith, gave you some faith. And so those who have received an allotment from God of the ability to believe is how they would look at it. But of course, this is not what he's talking about.

He's saying those who have received, this is logcano, L-A-G-C-H-A-N-O. It's not lambano, it's logcano. And logcano means to obtain something as a portion, to receive or obtain by lot or by divine will.

This is the word that was used for being selected through the casting of lots, to be appointed or to be chosen. Now, I mentioned briefly that 2 Peter, and I actually mentioned this at the end of our 1 Peter study, 2 Peter is quite different stylistically, quite different in its Greek presentation than 1 Peter. And it was not as universally accepted, not as immediately accepted as from the Apostle Peter because it was different.

And I think there are explanations for this. We know that Peter had help from Silas or Silvanus in 1 Peter. Remember, he mentions him at the end.

And he was probably the amanuensis, and he seems to have been a very polished Greek speaker and had a command of the language. And he probably, as he took these things down, gave Peter a little bit of help in terms of expression. This one was not taken down by Silvanus.

We don't know who did. It might have been Peter writing by himself or whatever. But if anything, this Greek, it's not rough and primitive.

It's more wordy. It's more archaic in some ways. It's atticized Greek.

There's a real interesting note on this, if I can find it. It has been described as torturous Greek. In fact, one commentator said that 2 Peter is the one New Testament writing that gains by translation.

Think about that. It actually helps the book to be rendered in English instead of trying to struggle through it in Greek. It's the one New Testament book that gains by translation.

It's better if you read it in the English than trying to hack through it in the Greek. Because it's got a lot of what they call atticisms, references back to classical Greek. You can imagine that in the backwater areas of Galilee where Peter grew up, they didn't have the trendy metropolitan, worldly-wise traffic coming through there that they did in the port cities and in the places where the Romans had a lot of passage and contact.

They're kind of a backwater. There are phrases and modes of expression in this country when you get into the mountains and into the deep south that actually preserve old Britishisms and even British pronunciations that go back to pre-revolutionary days. These people just haven't been touched by modern times, at least not until the Internet.

There's a few places in Appalachia where they still don't have a bubble and they can't Google these things up. And you find archaisms and you find quaint expressions that survive in these backward areas that just have not been touched. Well, I suspect that this is actually Peter's style.

That people from Galilee, one of the reasons people said, can any good thing come from Galilee or Nazareth or some of these places is they were just considered backward. They're old-fashioned. They're old style.

You go to your country churches and when people pray, they'll still use King James English. When I grew up, everybody that prayed, prayed in King James English. Remember that? Father who art in heaven, we thank thee for thy many blessings.

Who says thee and thy anymore? Well, and in your city churches, you don't hear people say that. Turn on the radio on a Sunday. You hear anybody praying thee and thy and thou art and how

great thou art? Does anybody write that kind of stuff in lyrics anymore? No.

Where does it persist? Go to your country churches. You'll still hear people praying up a storm in good old 1887 KJV English because they just haven't been touched. So anyway, I think this probably accounts for his style or is one explanation for it.

But this book has been widely attacked as not legitimate, that Peter didn't write it. I am not going to make a big to-do of refuting these things. It will become clear in the course of looking at the text that it has much in common, idea-wise, with 1 Peter.

And this is one of those points of contact. This is one of the first ones. When he says, to those who have been allotted a like precious faith, who have been apportioned a like precious faith, how did Peter start the first letter? You remember, at least I got up on my soapbox decrying the translation in the first couple of verses of 1 Peter because you remember what they do.

They move a Greek word completely out of one sentence and into another. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God in verse 2. And elect doesn't belong in verse 2. Look at it in Greek. Elect is in verse 1. To the chosen pilgrims of the diaspora, those chosen to be scattered according to the foreknowledge of God, not chosen for sanctification and obedience.

This is a violent rearrangement of both the vocabulary and the ideas in those first two verses. What was Peter trying to say? And you remember, it carries through the entire letter. You people are the point of God's spear in the Roman Empire.

You are the ones God has chosen to be scattered, to be his thousand points of light, to use a Bush one-ism. You're the reflectors of God's glory. You're the carriers of the gospel outside Israel, outside Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

You're in Galatia and Pontus and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia, chosen to be those pilgrims, chosen to represent Christ as the gospel begins to spread through the empire. This is what you have been allotted. This is what God has elected you for.

It is your life circumstance. Well, now he's saying the same thing in his second letter. He's writing to the same people.

Toward the end of this, he's going to say, you remember I wrote you in the first, this is now the second letter I have written you, talking to the same people. So what does he say here? To those who have been allotted a like, precious faith. Like who? Like Peter.

He says, look, I'm a doulos and I'm an apostle. God chose me to walk with Christ, to see his glory and to learn it, to lay hold of it myself and then to communicate it to you. You have just as much a precious calling in the faith as I. That's what he's saying.

You're choosing to be out there scattered in the world. Where are we today? We are strangers

and pilgrims in the world. We are in the world, but not of it.

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which place we wait for the return of the Lord Jesus. But in the meantime, we are called to live this life. We are called to navigate circumstances.

We are called to lay hold of righteousness by faith in mundane, ordinary, small time, seemingly insignificant circumstances. That's our calling. Some of us are called to be students.

Some of us are called to be in jobs. We are called to be in various relationships. We've been called to this generation.

We've been called to whatever nation we live, whatever state we live, whatever town we live, whatever time and place we live, the circumstances we have. This is our portion. This is our allotment.

You didn't get my allotment. I didn't get your allotment. God has chosen us, 1 Peter 1. He has allotted to us a place of faith, an opportunity to live the faith.

That's our allotment. It's not the ability. Everybody's got the ability.

Anybody that sits in a chair, anybody that drives a car has faith. If you get on Central Expressway or the tollway and you drive with traffic at 80 plus miles an hour, you have faith. You have faith that the wheels are not going to fly off, that your steering linkage is going to hold, that you're not going to fall out, that other people are not going to hit you.

It is the ability to believe in things that you have no way of verifying. I am certain that nobody in the sound of my voice pried their hubcaps off and checked their lug bolts today, and yet you all drove places. You believe that they were tightened in the past and that they still hold.

That's faith. The merit of faith is not in the ability to have it. The merit of faith is in the object.

What do you believe in? If I believe in a really bad car, I told you the story of my 1956 Volkswagen Bug and the steering linkage did not hold, and the piece of round leather that connected the steering wheel to my tie rods and so on tore because it was 40 years old. Well, my faith was in a bad object. I trusted it just like any other car, and all of a sudden the wheel just spun like Pat Sajak and Vanna White, and it's just going around, and the car is completely out of my control.

Thank the good Lord I wasn't on the highway. I was in a parking lot, and I could brake to a stop before I hit anything, but it just spun in a very lively and frightening manner. Well, I had faith in it just like I had every other day when it worked, and the merit of faith is in the object.

So Peter is making the same point. That's why it's kind of an odd statement, but he's tweaking them. He's challenging them.

He's getting their attention. That's why he uses Logcano instead of Lombano. He says, you know, how was the land divided in Israel when Joshua went in with the armies, crossed the Jordan, and hail fell from heaven, and God gave them victory? And then they said, all right, where are the tribes going to live? How did they do that? It was by lots.

Logcano. Now, does that mean that it was just random and God had no say in it? Not at all. Casting lots in Israel meant, I'm going to let God show me how this ought to lay.

And Judah got the allotment where Judea is, and Caleb got the chance to go up and take that mountain where there were still some living enemies, and he's the oldest man in Israel, and he said, let me at it. But it was by lot. It was by lot.

Logcano. Our particular place and time and situation is allotted to us. It doesn't mean that it's accidental or random.

It doesn't mean that it's happenstance or inscrutable. What it does mean is that God is ultimately the instigator and the determiner of that. And your allotment is just as great as mine.

And your allotment and my allotment are just as great as the Apostle Peter's allotment. Each of us has been given something that is perfect for us. It's God's great, perfect plan.

Those of you who have been allotted, just as precious a faith as mine, Peter says. I'm not up here wearing a pointy hat, waving holy smoke. I'm not up here as the bedrock of the church, and you're subordinate and waiting for me to speak ex cathedra.

He says, look, your faith, your position in Christ is just as precious as mine. Don't sell ourselves short. Don't let ourselves off the hook, thinking, well, my thing is kind of insignificant.

It doesn't really matter. It's the Billy Graham's. It's the Charles Stanley's.

It's the W.A. Criswell's. It's the big shakers and movers, the great names. It's the Charles Spurgeon's.

It's the Billy Sunday's. It's the Dwight Moody's. It's the big timers.

Those are the ones where God is really moving the big pieces on the chessboard. At best, I'm a little pawn or something. Like precious faith allotted by God to you.

We tend to give ourselves an excuse. It doesn't really matter if I apply. It doesn't really matter if I'm a little bit less faithful.

I mean, I might hurt myself. Maybe I won't get as much blessing or reward, but it's basically just me. Can you imagine what would be different about the world if the Apostle Paul had not been faithful? If the Apostle Peter had not been faithful? If he hadn't learned his lesson on the night

Jesus was betrayed and came out firing all guns after the resurrection and went to Jerusalem with John and healed the man on the temple steps and preached that great sermon in Acts and went on and visited Cornelius and all the rest of it? What if Peter had just said, Well, you know, it's the other apostles.

They didn't deny the Lord, and I should just kind of shuffle off here and stay out of sight and not make an issue of myself anymore. I'll just fade quiet. If he had done that, the whole history of the church would be different.

But he didn't know at the time. How could Peter possibly imagine that we'd be here talking about him nearly 2,000 years later reading epistles that he wrote? He was faithful, and he says, You believers have just as precious a faith as I do. Your life, your witness, your place in God's plan is isotime with mine, and I'm an apostle, he says.

So, get with the program. We have no idea what the future holds, what God is going to do, what light he may shine, what glory may be revealed in our lives in some third or fourth testament, in some giant Bible that's composed of all of human history. We read about David and Solomon and Daniel and Moses.

Well, all of us may be in a chapter or two. Wouldn't you want it to be a great, glorious chapter? It's like precious faith. It's a like opportunity.

We are called saints. We are called to be faithful. So, Peter is going to really emphasize this.

This is his introduction, and this sets the tone and gives us the idea of what the theme is going to be. By the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. We don't have time to go back and look at it, but you go look and circle all the places in 1 Peter where he talked about righteousness and how important righteousness was.

In verse 2, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that does not fade away, reserved in heaven, kept by power of God through faith for deliverance, ready to be revealed in the last time. You greatly rejoice in this. Verse 9, receiving the end of your faith, the deliverance of your souls.

The prophets wrote about this, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ was indicating when he testified the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. They were ministering these things which have been reported to you. Preach the gospel by the Holy Spirit, things which angels long to look into.

Therefore, 1 Peter 1, 13, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, rest your hope fully on the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The grace that is to be brought

to you. What did we talk about last time? What is the target for grace? What qualifies us to receive the grace of God? It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Without that righteousness, we cannot receive grace. It is grace that we have that righteousness and all of the rest of God's grace targets that righteousness. As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts.

He talks about that here in 2 Peter, that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. In verse 4, same thing here. Not conforming yourself to the former lusts and ignorance, but as he who called you as holy, you be holy in your conduct.

Because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy. Conduct yourselves in fear, knowing you are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ. Through him you believe in God who raised him from the dead, gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

So, grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. As his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. This was the theme of his first letter.

All things that pertain to life, all things that pertain to godliness. This is how you can be obedient. This is how you can please God.

By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We have seen this word through over and over again in 2 Peter chapter 1. And this preposition in Greek is speaking of instrumentality. This is the way that something happens.

Now, this is what I want to know, don't you? It's one thing to see a bunch of holy words and calls to righteous living and this is what you should be, this is what you ought to be and we see it, we're convicted. We say, wow, you know, obedience and holiness and prayer and faithfulness and all of that. And I find myself not nearly as glow-in-the-dark as all of these descriptions of what I ought to be.

How do I do this? You keep telling me what I ought to be. Be ye holy for I am holy. Live out your remaining days.

Reflect the glory of God. I say, well, that's great, but how do I actually do that? Because I forget. I get in the midst of the moment.

I say the wrong thing. I think the wrong thing. I worry, I fret, I sin.

I'm a mess. My motives aren't pure. I find myself succumbing to my old nature, to my aggravations, to my pride, to my insecurities.

So, I have this impossible standard that the Bible constantly calls me to. How am I supposed to meet that? Well, that's what I like about this letter. Just like the first letter, Peter not only tells us what we should be, what our calling is, what our allotment is in Christ, but he tells us how to do it.

This is the way. Where does the power come from? Where does this actual practical transformation come from? It's not an act of will. It's not just because I pray for it and say, Oh God, make me holy.

Oh God, make me faithful. Oh God, make me better than I am. It doesn't come by prayer.

It doesn't come by wishful thinking. It doesn't come by good intentions. There is a concrete, definite path to become what God wants us to be.

And that's the great thing about this letter. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see the by means of statements that Peter makes in this first chapter.