

Prayer

Jesus, my Lord and Master. Other people regard prayers such as this as beyond comprehension, because I accept that You are real, and not a figment of my imagination. May my words and deeds be so inspired by my faith that others see in me not just a religious interest, but a commitment to truth, honesty and goodness in the world. May they therefore see evidence of a God of love, and seek to know more. Thank You, Lord Jesus: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly theme: prayers after Easter

Pray today that God's people throughout the world might live as 'Easter People' in the truest sense of the world, for Christ is risen in our lives each and every day. Pray for that renewal whereby the people of God demonstrate an active and effective work of faith in their daily lives, witnessing naturally to the power of God that has changed their lives.

Meditation

Lord Jesus, what do you need me to hear today?

A shattering earthquake which overturns my world and dreams
So that You can replace them with Your greater vision?

A quiet voice that whispers hidden truths in my ear
And demands that I act in discretion for the good of all?

The sweet music of success which encourages me onwards
To greater things, and higher hopes for all that is to come?

The cacophony of sound generated by all life's pressures
Which clamour for attention, so that I know I need Your help!

The silence of Your eternal 'STOP' which says 'REST'
And honour Me by doing nothing, as I said at the beginning' (*Gen 2:1-4*)

Lord Jesus, bless me as I hear what news You have for me today.

Bible Study - 2 Peter 1:1-4

¹ *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as valuable as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ:*

² *Ever more grace and peace be yours through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

³ *His divine power has given us all we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.* ⁴ *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption which is in the world because of evil desires.*

Bible Study

There is some considerable uncertainty about when the second letter of Peter was written. It is certainly a substantial and influential letter from which we can learn a great deal, but it is very difficult to place. It does not address any particular church or group of churches, yet at various places shows a knowledge of other letters of Paul (3:15) and other writings of the New Testament (3:16), and was therefore probably written towards the end of the first century A.D. Certainly, if the writer was Simon Peter of the Gospels, then he was by this time a very old man. However, one thing is certain; there is a maturity of style and content in the letter which reflects the church as it developed throughout the Roman Empire at this time. The letter was written for general distribution, and focuses on a number of issues which were of concern at the end of the first century AD. Not least the coming of the Lord Jesus in Glory (see 3:1f.)

At the beginning of the letter, Peter makes a general appeal, addressing those whose faith was 'as valuable as ours'. He clearly meant the church as a whole, in the days before it was split apart by the divisions which came in the later years of the second century, as heresies began to make inroads into the church's organisation. There was a sense of shared values amongst Christians to which Peter could appeal, and it was based upon 'the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' (1:1). The memory of Jesus' life and death was still something very recent in people's memories, and many individual Christians would be able to talk of parents or relatives who had known something of the events of Jesus' life and death, and this was a powerful unifying factor. Peter greeted his readers with the words 'grace and peace' (1:2) used also in the first letter (1 Peter 1:2) and other letters of Paul (e.g. Phil 1:2). These words combined the common greeting of the day, 'grace to you', with the traditional Jewish greeting 'peace' ('shalom').

The opening theme of the letter shows a sense of deep gratitude and awesome wonder at the preciousness of what God had done through Jesus Christ, which Peter compared with the 'evil desires' of the world. Although the Roman Empire had hundred's of years before it would split apart and be destroyed, many people felt even then that those who ruled the Empire were far from the great model leaders of the past; Caesar, Augustus, and others; who had made Rome great. Later emperors such as Nero and Caligula in the first century had established their power on nepotism and corruption, and common people were beginning to mistrust the way the world in which they lived was governed. It was fertile ground for the church, who could win converts by holding fast to what was simply described in this letter as 'godliness' and 'goodness' (1:3). Verses 3 and 4 may not sound like this to us now, but they were a sound basis for evangelism in the world of the first century A.D. and were a confident statement of what Christians believed. It was something people would listen to if they were seeking something to believe in other than the fading might of the great Roman Empire!

It may be worth considering whether these words could be used today for the same purposes and whether they would have the same effect! Many people are still searching for God even now, though they do not go to church. They want to know the truth about Jesus and believe that goodness and truth are of more value than the lies and corruption of the world in which we live. We should not be ashamed of this our Gospel; it is a precious heritage.

Space for notes

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What do the words 'grace' and 'peace' mean today, and are they a helpful way to greet people if we were to try and restore this in the church?
2. How much of this text would be worth using in an evangelistic sermon today? Is there enough of the Gospel within this text to be preached?
3. Discuss in your group what you think Peter refers to when he says 'the great and precious promises' of God (1:4)

Discipleship

When the writers of the letters in the Bible wrote down what they had to say, every word they wrote was important. The parchment on which it was written was far more costly than paper today, and mistakes could not be changed! Such were the disciplines which God used to create these great letters of Scripture. If you have not done this recently, try writing down what you believe, but do this as if you were writing as the letter writers of Scripture did, concisely and without going back over your work or changing it. You will find this is a taxing but worthwhile exercise.

Prayer

May we never be afraid, Lord Jesus, to give You glory for what You have done for us, and give You thanks for the great promise of Salvation You have fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Open our hearts to honour You and love You in return for all You have done for us, and keep us secure in our faith, we pray: AMEN