

## PRECIOUS FAITH

2 Peter 1:1

### Introduction:

2 Peter is a personal letter. It bears the personal signature of "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Among Christians there is no need to say more. This name was known in every company of believers in the first century. They knew the familiar story of how Peter came to be a part of his name. Originally it had been simply "Simon the son of Jona" from a little fishing village on the sea of Gallilee until he met Jesus Christ. After meeting Christ he became Peter, the Rock, by the will and work of Jesus. From Jesus Christ he personally received an appointment to be an Apostle, and he of his volition chose to be the bond-slave of Jesus Christ. Anyone who was a Christian would surely welcome any personal letter that bore the signature of Simon Peter, the leading Apostle.

This letter may be addressed to you. It is addressed "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. If you are a person of faith, a true believer, then this letter is to you. The message found in this letter is a message that you need if you are to live a godly life in this present world.

Since we have two letters with the signature of Simon Peter, it is interesting to compare them. They are strikingly different. The first letter was written with the purpose of giving encouragement to those facing persecution. The second letter is written probably to the same group of people, but for the purpose of warning them about the danger of false teachers. In these two letters then the Apostle speaks to two of the primary difficulties encountered in living the Christian life. Suffering has been a problem in every age, and there has always been false teachers.

This word of address from Peter is so helpful. It gives us some very important insights into what it means to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want us to consider each word of the address in some detail. There is some confusion abroad about the meaning and place of "faith" in the Christian life. Since no one can be a Christian without this precious commodity, let's see what Peter says.

### I. THE SOURCE OF FAITH.

"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Peter reminds us of the source of our personal, saving trust in God in this passage. We cannot claim credit for being a believer for it is something that we "obtained."

"Obtained" is an interesting word. The word means to obtain something by lot. This makes it clear that personal faith is not the result of anything that you have done. It has been given to you by the mercy of God Himself. It surely carries the strong implication that saving faith is a gift of God.

Peter gives further emphasis to this truth when he adds, "through the righteousness of God and out' Saviour Jesus Christ." Some way our obtaining this precious faith came about through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is just one of those incidental indications that those earliest Christians worshipped Jesus Christ as God. The Greek construction makes this a clear reference to Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. But how did His righteousness bring about our faith? Righteousness may be a reference to His righteous activity in the Cross and

Resurrection. Faith on our part was made possible by His righteous activity on our behalf.

The writer of Hebrews attributes our faith to Him. He refers to Him as the "author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2.) Our faith finds its beginning in Him and His activity. Paul also points us in this direction. In the sermon he preached at Mars Hill, he declared, "Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:31) "Assurance" is the Greek word for faith. God has given to us faith or assurance by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. Furthermore Paul declared that God hath given it to "all men."

This is an important truth. Those of us who have our faith resting in the Saviour this morning cannot claim credit. We would never have come to such faith in God if it had not been for the righteous activity of Jesus in the Cross and Resurrection. Then to make it even more true, faith came to our hearts only as the Holy Spirit brought the Gospel to our hearts with power, thus producing faith. So even our faith that receives salvation is as much a gift of God as the salvation that is received. To God be the glory, great things He has done. He has worked in such a way to call unto Himself a believing people.

## II. The EQUALITY OF FAITH.

Equality of faith is the second great truth set forth by Peter. He writes, "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." The New International Version translates this, "have received a faith as precious as ours." "Like" precious faith!

But who does the Apostle mean when he says, "with us." Some understand this to be a word to Gentile Christians so the "with us" means with us "Jews." This would mean that through faith the Jew and the Gentile stand in spiritual equality through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is surely a truth set forth many places in the New Testament. In the family of God faith is the important element--not race or national origin.

However others understand the Apostle to mean "with us" Apostles. This would be an affirmation that in the family of God all of the privileges are faith privileges. It would be an acknowledgement that those who came after the Apostles have the same spiritual opportunity that belonged to the Apostles. Their faith is equal in its preciousness and importance.

This seems to be the better understanding. It is not clear that Peter is writing just to Gentile Christians. This is better seen as a true reflection of the humility and understanding of Peter. Others may have placed Peter in some exalted position in the family, but Peter sees himself standing right alongside every other believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever privileges are open to him are open to them since they all come by faith. Each one has the same opportunity. Since we all come to God by faith, there is no distinction--but a beautiful spiritual equality of faith.

## III. THE VALUE OF FAITH

Precious is a favorite word of Peter. In this same context he will write of precious promises. In his other letter he spoke of the blood of Christ as being precious, and of Christ Himself being precious. Here he speaks of "precious faith." The word means that faith is something to be held in honor, something to be

prized, something of great value or price.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren makes a helpful suggestion here. He reminds us that the value of the faith is not in the faith itself, but in that which the faith does or procures. He points to that reference in the Acts of the Apostles to the "door of faith"(Acts 14:27.)

In itself a door is of little value. You would probably never refer to a door by itself as precious. Yet a door can provide entrance into things that are precious. It can provide entrance into palaces and treasures of all kinds. This is the way of faith. It is the channel through which we enter into the things of God, the precious things of God. All of the riches of His grace and glory come to us through our faith. So faith is precious because of these treasures that it secures for us. It is not the treasure, but is the door to the treasure. It is not the thing most precious, but it is the means of laying hold of the thing most precious. This makes the faith itself a thing of great value.

Dr. Maclaren also reminds us that faith is called a shield by Paul. Of course we know that faith is simply the means of making God our shield of protection. Of how much value is the protection of God when you are engaged in the moral and spiritual battles of life? How much value would be placed on the assurance and security that comes when you know that you are kept by the power of God unto salvation? You know this by faith. Faith is the means by which this protection of God is made real in your life. Can you not see why the Apostle would speak of precious faith?

This is emphasized by the fact that nothing else will do. There is nothing that can take the place of faith. There is no adequate substitute. No amount of religious deeds will ever do what faith does. God has ordained that in His dealings with us it will be on the basis of our trust, our faith, our dependence upon him. Since there is nothing that can take its place, surely it is a very precious commodity.

Conclusion:

Is this letter written to you? Are you one of these who has this "like precious faith?" If so, then to God be the glory. This precious faith that gives you spiritual equality with the giants of God and gives you entrance into the precious treasures of God is a special gift from God himself. You should praise Him for even your faith.

Do you hesitate to identify yourself as a believer in Jesus Christ? Then I have a closing word for you. I encourage you to take the course of action followed by a man who came to Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. This poor fellow had a child that was possessed by an evil spirit, and was in great danger of being destroyed. The disciples of Jesus were impotent when they tried to help the lad. In desperation he brought the son to Jesus himself. Jesus challenged the man by saying to him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

When the man heard this word, he tearfully cried out, "Lord, I believe : help thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9:24) Jesus did help the man's unbelief, and his son was delivered.

You may feel yourself to be short on the needed faith to trust in Christ. Do you dare use what faith you have, and ask Him for more faith? He will hear your prayer. If you have a will, a desire to believe on Him, you can know that He will come to your rescue. He desires your trust in Him more than anything else. Will you make the prayer of that desperate father your prayer?