

## Our Precious Faith

2 Peter 1:1-2 (05/04/14)

Ernie Godshall  
Faith Bible Church  
Evansville, Indiana

A 63-year old man recently needing help came to a hospital in Delhi. He said he accidentally swallowed a bottle cap. However, during surgery the physicians found more than a bottom cap. They fished out 12 little bars of gold, each weighing more than an ounce. If someone could cut into your soul, would they find anything precious? Turn to 2 Peter. We're going to talk about something more precious than gold or even our own lives – our precious faith.

For the next five months we'll be growing our way through 2 Peter. Peter is getting old. He's already written an earlier letter dealing with trials and suffering. He's about 75 when he wrote this letter and about to be martyred, refusing to deny his precious faith in Christ. Look at chapter 1:13-14. He knows his time is short and he wants to remind us of precious truths; ones we already know, but need to know more.

If there's one word to summarize this short epistle, I'd say it's "Grow!" In verses five and following, Peter begins talking about diligently adding to our faith godly virtues, and he ends his letter exhorting us to keep on growing! He's 75 and hasn't stopped growing! Maybe you're over 50 and getting older every day, grunting and groaning when you get out of the car. Keep growing. Tim Turner was a preacher in northern Indiana and a biblical counselor at Faith Church in Lafayette, before moving to Los Angeles to teach in the counseling department at Master's College. I remember Tim saying, "Very few men over 50 keep aggressively growing and changing in their faith." Sadly, Tim fell dead on a golf course a few years back. Pastor Bill Goode, who is also with the Lord, used to say, "I want to die searching God's Word for answers." That is challenging to us who have some high mileage on these earth mobiles. But 75-year old Peter did not lose his edge. Tradition says he was martyred for Christ in the mid sixties in Rome, and upside down because he didn't feel worthy to be crucified the way his Lord and Savior was! Keep us growing, Lord!

Here's a simple outline of the book:

Chapter one: Grow in deeper **assurance** of your faith.

Chapter two: Grow in greater **discernment** in your faith.

Chapter three: Grow in stronger **expectation** of the coming of our Lord! It may be a while, God is still saving His people, but He is coming!

Let's look at verses one and two this morning, and we'll focus on that little phrase "a faith of the same kind" or, as in the KJV, "like precious faith." It could be "a faith that is equally precious."

*1) Simon Peter, a bond-servant (slave) and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2) Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;*

**This faith was precious to Peter.** Peter describes himself as Simon Peter. Why? Why not just Peter, like in his first epistle? Simon was his BC name, before his brother Andrew found him and brought him to Christ. Remember that event? Andrew came to Christ and then immediately went to his own brother Simon and said, "We've found the Messiah" and the Bible says Andrew brought Peter to Jesus! In John 1:42 Jesus immediately changed Simon's name to Peter, the Stone. Now here is Peter, after all these years, identifying himself not just as Peter but as Simon. Here's what I think. He never forgot how Christ saved him out of his lost and ignorant days, his Simon days as a fisherman. I wonder if the older he got the more conscious he became of how unworthy he was, how dependent on Christ he was, and how much he loved Christ even more now than ever! Peter would never forget the cock crowing twice, his three denials, and then Christ questioning him three times on the shore of Galilee, "Do you love me, Peter?" "Yes, yes, yes." Peter would go to heaven both humble and thankful.

Do you remember your BC days? What were you living for when Christ saved you? How thankful we should be, right here with Peter, for intervening and sovereignly arranging for someone to bring you the

gospel, for God opening your heart to believe, and because God in mercy and grace had appointed you to eternal life, you believed. Peter would never wind up in heaven taking just a little of the credit for getting there, and neither will we.

Peter identifies himself in two totally opposite ways: slave and apostle. A slave of Jesus Christ. And do you know that's exactly what every believer is. A slave of Jesus Christ. A willing, happy, excited slave, but a slave none the less. Christ came into the slave market of sin and purchased us with His own blood, lock, stock, and barrel, to be His possession. We aren't Christ's employee or assistant. You are not your own, you've been bought with a price.

Peter was a "capital A" Apostle, which meant that Christ personally chose him in that first century to be one of His official representatives for the foundation of the church. You see him in Acts 2-12 functioning as an apostle, preaching powerfully and healing and even raising people from the dead. We must say though, he was never given supremacy over the other apostles by Christ. He never assumed supremacy, and the others never conceded him supremacy. The whole notion of apostolic succession and that Peter was the first bishop of Rome and therefore the first Pope is simply not biblical. Thank God for Luther who faced down the entire political-ecclesiastical world with those solas of the Reformation we hold dearly today! By declaring the supremacy of Scripture alone, he snapped the entire Roman religious tyranny.

### **This Faith in Christ is Precious to Every Believer**

*To those who have received a faith of the same kind (like precious faith) as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:*

### **True Faith – Knowing, Agreeing, and Submitting.**

Now if someone could cut into your soul, would they find this precious faith Peter is talking about? First, what is faith? Faith is not just believing Jesus existed, or believing Jesus is God, or can save, or is the most important person ever. Demons believe Jesus is the Savior, but they aren't saved. True faith includes knowing who Jesus is and what He did. He is the God-Man who came to this world to go to the cross and pay for the sins of all who believe on Him. You've got to know that. It isn't just, "I have faith." Faith also means you not only know, but you agree you need Christ. You realize you are guilty before God, you have sinned, you are in trouble. You see that Christ came to save sinners and that He is your only hope for forgiveness. But there's a third element in faith, and that is trust or submission to Christ personally as your Lord and Savior. When you come to Christ you begin to follow Christ for the rest of your life. That's true faith.

### **A Faith We Receive**

So how do you get faith? You have received it. You did not figure this out on your own. You didn't earn it. You did not generate faith out of your own sinful heart. Faith is a gift from God that you receive. Our hearts are dead in rebellion against God, corrupt, and frankly, wicked. You do not have in your natural human heart any power to receive Christ. Faith is something you receive from God. In Acts 13:48, as Paul was preaching the gospel of Christ to Jews and Gentiles, the Bible says "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." They believed because they were appointed to eternal life by God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says you're saved by grace through faith, and that is not of yourself. You didn't bring this about, it is the gift of God. You can no more get saving faith out of a natural man's heart than you can get gold out of an empty bag or a rabbit out of an empty hat. It's simply not possible. Man's heart is at war with God. God must intervene and give man a new heart, and it is that new heart that is then able to believe. And that is a precious thing! Without God giving us faith we would still be lost on our way to hell. That's one great reason faith is precious. It is purely of God's grace, given to us by God.

So how do you get this gift of faith? You hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and bow your heart to Christ as your Lord and Savior. That's how God gives faith, through the gospel. Once you truly believe in Christ, you will realize God gave that power to believe to you, and you will give Him all the glory! A hungry man doesn't have to understand all the molecular structure of that catfish he's eating. And you don't have to understand all the mysteries of faith. But you do need to know you need Christ and you must come to him! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom you and I are chief. Believe now! Don't

argue, but believe in Christ. Don't hesitate, but believe now. You have nothing to do but trust yourself into the arms of a receiving Savior Jesus Christ, much like you'd submit yourself to a surgeon to do brain surgery on you.

Listen to this great, great verse from John 6:37, "All the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Who comes to Jesus? All the Father gives Him. Why? He gave them to His Son. How many? All, every single one. Are you one of those "ones?" What do you have to do here? Come. That's faith. What does Christ promise? You have His word that He will certainly not throw you out. Listen, every believer is a love gift from the Father to the Son! I just love that truth.

You see this mighty truth four times in John 17 – "The ones You have given to Me," over and over. Salvation doesn't start with you, it starts with the Father choosing you to give to His Son, who came to purchase us from our sin, and then the Spirit who comes into our hearts, gives us new hearts so that we are able to embrace Jesus! And Jesus will lose none!

### **The Same Kind of Faith**

Every believer has the same kind of faith as Peter and all the apostles and every believer down through the ages had. The word "of the same kind" is "iso," or equal (like an isosceles triangle, with two equal sides), and "timon," or precious. Your faith is "equally precious" and no different than the faith of those early Christians and even the apostles. It hasn't changed one iota. The gospel has not improved over these 2000 years. There have been no upgrades or bugs to fix. It is the exact same message for the exact same problem and does the exact same work in human hearts now as then. Those Gentiles in Acts who believed in Christ had the same joy and assurance and hope that we have. Man's need hasn't changed one iota, regardless of all the Freuds and Maslows and Jungs and Phils and Oprahs who have swept into the modern world trying to figure us out. People sinned and were guilty back then just like we sin and are guilty today. People were murdering and stealing and divorcing and engaging in adultery and fornication and homosexual behavior and lusting and greedy and bitter and angry and lying and covering up and filled with rage (camel or donkey rage) then, not differently than now. War and traitors and disease and pain and suffering and abuse and hatred plagued man then just like now.

And there is one same faith for all. The gospel wipes out all human differences. Snails and elephants, eagles and turkeys equally entered the ark the same way. There will not be fancy mansions for wealthy people and little hobbit-holes for us regular folks in heaven. God will reward us, but we've all got mansions waiting for us!

### **A Precious Faith**

Why is your faith precious to you? That could take a long time to unpack. Your faith is precious because it saves you from your sin, guilt, and condemnation. It brings you to God. It looks to Christ and not to you. It brings God all the glory. Salvation isn't 99% God's work and then 1% mine. No, it's all of God's grace. It guards me from Satan's missiles – like Captain America's shield, the shield of faith quenches all the fiery darts of the evil one. It takes me through trials. God uses trials to strengthen and purify my faith! My faith is precious because while I'm the one believing and my faith like Peter's may go up and down, God has promised to keep us by the power of God through faith. Jesus told Peter that Satan was going to severely sift him like wheat. But then Jesus promised, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not!" We don't keep ourselves believing! God keeps us believing!

Faith is precious because it delivers us from sinful habits. A genuine faith changes your life. If you claim to believe in Christ but your life hasn't changed direction and you don't have new desires to please and know God more, you probably aren't saved. Don't rest in a false faith, friend.

And perhaps best of all, faith is precious because it supports you when you face death, whether violent or not. I'm sure Peter understood this as he faced the horrors of crucifixion. When Martyn Lloyd-Jones was facing his death, his biographer asked him if he agreed with Spurgeon that strong faith could exist with little feeling or enjoyment. He agreed, "Feelings vary a lot." He quoted one of his favorite hymns, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness; I dare not trust my sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!"

Can you honestly say your faith is precious to you? I'm not talking about being a "person of faith." That phrase bugs me. I'm wondering even with, "I believe in God." Which God? I mean a person whose faith believes whole-heartedly in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

### **A Faith Grounded Firmly and Absolutely in the Gospel of Jesus Christ**

Your faith, if it is genuine and on the solid rock and not sinking sand, is "by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." This is Peter's way of teaching us justification by faith alone. Our faith isn't grounded in our righteousness, but Christ's righteousness. We don't have faith in our faith. Faith is like a pipeline from heaven that brings the rich oil of God's saving grace into your soul. Faith links us to Christ.

And you'll notice right here that Peter speaks of the deity of Christ. That's what makes His righteousness the gold standard of heaven. Jesus, being God and Man and living that perfect life and dying that substitutionary death, gives us His righteousness and God declares us righteous. Your faith is not just a general faith or a faith in faith. It is faith in our God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

### **Multiplication of the Treasures of your Faith – v. 2**

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;*

Grace and peace are the blessings and treasures that flow out of your precious faith. Grace is God's rich working in our lives, motivating us to grow and change. Peace is that wonderful stability and steadiness that your faith works in you keeping your hearts and minds in Christ. And how do we keep vigorously multiplying these in our lives? By getting to know more and more all God is for us in Christ. This word "knowledge" is a strengthened form of knowledge. It's more than just academic knowledge. It's a knowledge that grips and gets traction in your heart and moves your will and desires to follow Christ as God's glorious Savior for you. It's a knowledge that feeds your faith to prize Jesus Christ above all else! Peter will refer to knowing and knowledge frequently in this letter. He wants us to keep growing in the knowledge of Christ and never stop until we meet Christ face to face.

What a surprise those surgeons had when they found twelve little bars of gold in the man's stomach. Saving faith is far more precious. If we could cut into your soul, is this precious faith there? Is Christ so precious you are willing to die for Him? Is your faith the most precious thing in your life? If not, will you right now in your heart receive Christ? Be ready to talk about Jesus and how blessed you are to know Christ as your God and Savior. Give that fellow at the counter an invite to our church. Let him know how excited you are to be growing in Christ and how precious your faith really is.