

## **Sermon series on 2 Peter: 'A Perambulation through (2) Peter'**

**Sermon No: 1. Date:11/9/16. Preacher: Rev. Adrian Hallett**

**Reading: 1 Peter 1:1-11. Title: 'Checking the Foundations'**

To Perambulate: 'To walk round in order to inspect'.

So over the coming weeks we are going to walk through 2 Peter and inspect it. To look at it in more detail that we might understand its message and purpose. To inspect it yes, not in any sense to stand above it.... To be detached from it ..... but to understand it and submit to it, so that we might learn and grow from it. Which is why Peter wrote it.

### **Why 2 Peter? Two reasons:**

1. Good from time to time to study a whole book of The Bible....rather than `clips` with it and hear sermons on bits of a book. Important to get to know books of the Bible...to get more of an understanding of why they were written...to get an understanding of the message and purpose of the book. So, rather than look as say Isaiah which has sixty six chapters, thought it best to look at something a bit shorter! 2 Peter – three chapters.

2. 2 Peter because of the teaching Bob gave us – looking at `The Rapture` and then `The Millennium Reign` ....all to do with the end ....what will happen when Jesus returns. 2 Peter is all about the certainty of the Second Coming something I know that interests you all. There is a lot of confusion about the return of Jesus. Something not preached about very often these days (something I have neglected, to my shame, over many years of ministry.)

### **Why was 2 Peter written :**

Perhaps helpful to note, that whilst 1 Peter was written to help his readers deal with persecution from outside the Church, 2 Peter was written to help them deal with false teachers from inside the Church – particularly this teaching on the second coming.

You see something of the pastoral heart of Peter in this letter. He loves these Christians. Because he loves them, he warns them of the danger of these false teachers.... He wants to protect them...he wants them to grow and be strong.

### **So how does he go about this:**

**Chapter 1** : All about stimulating their Christian growth....all about building them up....strengthening them.

**Chapter 2**: All about combating false teaching...how to recognise false teachers.

**Chapter 3**: All about watchfulness in view of the Lord's return....all about the certainty of His return. Being ready for His return.

So Peter in another book in the New Testament written to combat false teaching...written to equip Christians to be able to recognise false teaching and teachers and to stand against it.

Virtually every letter in the New Testaments has this same threat.....has this same concern. The problem of fake teaching .....false teachers.... As soon as the Gospel was preached, as soon as the truth was proclaimed....Satan got in straight away, sowing his lies and deceit. That is the relevance of this book for us....the relevance of this book in every age and every generation of the Church.

There are still false teachers out there! Always have been, always will be, never truer in our day and age. The church is full of false teacher and false teaching....the church, generally speaking, is very poor...very weak when it comes to recognising false teachers and so they are allowed to promote their distortion of the truth unchallenged.

Generally speaking, Christians today are not equipped to recognise false teachers and their teaching....there is little or no discernment executed. As a result many many Christians are confused and uncertain. That is the relevance of 2 Peter.

So the point of this letter is to strengthen Christians...to encourage them.... To build them up. He does this by saying such things as *'make every effort to add to your faith'* (v. 5); *'Make your calling and election sure'* (v.10); *'...make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him'* (3.14), and *'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'* (3.18).

He is stirring them up...he is encouraging them....could be summed up as 'You have got it, now grow in it'.

Another pointer to the relevance of this book...many people in the churches today have “got it”...have heard the gospel...”got saved” and think that’s it. They have “got it” but don’t grow in it. “Don’t be immature” says Peter. Rather “grow up”...become mature in your Christian faith. He wants them to grow....he wants to stimulate growth in them and in us. So, how does he do that?

### **1. Check the foundations:**

If you are going to build anything, then first thing you must do is check the foundations. Same in the spiritual life. How do you build people up in the Christian faith? You make sure the foundations are solid, sound and secure.

If the foundations are shaky, there is nothing to build on – any attempts to build are doomed to failure....What you try to put in place will inevitably come crashing down around you. So here is Peter, concerned for his flock, desperate to protect them, wanting to equip them to face the subtle deception of the false teachers....wanting them to know the truth and to be able to identify error – so he checks their foundations.... He checks the foundations of their faith.

Let us go through that together, with Peter, that we might be able to check our own foundations of the Christian faith. Let us begin by acknowledging /recognising that over the last two hundred years the foundations of the Christian faith have been under attack as never before.

Let me give you an example of what I mean... I became a Christian in 1972. Gradually felt called to Ordination with the Church of England....was accepted. I went to Theological College for three years....really looked forward to it....to learn more about the Christian faith....to have time to study Theology in some depth as a new Christian. Perhaps I was rather naïve but it was a real shock to have to study theologians of the previous century who vociferously denied the key doctrines of the Christian faith. We studied Bultman & Moltman and many other theologians, who denied the virgin birth, the resurrection & penal substitution. Miracles were explained away. Creation was a no no and as for the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ, only people with no brains believed such a thing!

Thankfully, I was at a C of E college (Oak Hill) where the lecturers did not believe such things, they taught them because that was `the curriculum`, but they also taught us how to refute these false teachers.

A friend of mine went to a liberal theological college at about the same time as me.....finished his training... was ordained... but had lost his faith. His

foundations had been completely undermined....I am not even sure he continued in the ministry. The Church – and not just the C. of E. has been under attack... the foundations of the faith have been undermined as never before. Result? People coming out of the ministry who no longer believe the foundations of the faith. They no longer believe or accept what the Apostles taught... therefore Christians in the church no longer have firm foundations – they are easy prey to false teachers. So, check your foundations. Let me read to you verse 1 again: *'Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours'*. What is Peter saying here? Several things. Let us begin to unpack one of them.

### **A. There is only one faith**

Peter is writing to Gentiles....but he says *'A faith as precious as ours'* - he is saying you have the same faith as the other apostles....you have the same faith as me, Peter, you have the same faith as the Jews.. *'There is only one faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female'* (Gal.3:28) *'We are all one in Christ Jesus'*.

You and I are made right with God, just as Peter was....not because he was an Apostle, but because he believed and trusted in Christ for his salvation. It does not matter whether we are able or ignorant...learned or unlearned. These things are irrelevant. Power, position, prestige, social status, wealth – all again totally irrelevant. There is only one faith....there is only one way we can be accepted by God. By faith - His one faith – we all have to face the same truth!

But it is one faith in another sense. The only faith is the faith of the Apostles. “Precious faith”. As true today as when written. Modern man, in ‘his wisdom’ cannot believe and accept that a Gospel which was preached two thousand years ago can possibly be adequate today. We live in a very different world to the Apostles. Changing times demand a changed or a different gospel. You cannot accept the teaching of the Apostles today.

I have a book on my bookshelf “Did Paul get Jesus Right?”. David Wenham (the author) refutes those who try and drive a wedge between the teaching of Jesus and St. Paul....that Paul somehow distorted the teachings of Jesus. Wrong says Wenham; There is no difference. Another example of academics suggesting that the teachings of St. Paul, one of the Apostles, was somehow questionable is C.H. Dodd, revered New Testament scholar, who actually said that 'sometimes Paul got it wrong, that when he does, I haven't been afraid to say so'. That is the attitude and arrogance of modern scholarship!!

You cannot accept the teachings of the Apostles today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Now, what are we to say in response to this?

Let's go back to the beginnings of the church....go back to Acts 2 – Peter preaches at Pentecost.....3000 were added to their number that day.

3000 new believers - people responding to the Gospel message in their thousands! What was done with all these new believers? Acts 2:41 *'They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer'*.

Note that.....*'They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching'*. And what did they teach? Matthew 28 verses 18-20. The great commission....Jesus instructs His disciples *'Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you'*. They taught what they knew from the Lord Jesus....they taught what Jesus taught.

The foundation of the first believers of the church was *'the teaching of the Apostles'*....a teaching that was clothed with a unique authority conferred on the Apostles.

The Christian faith is built upon the teaching of the Apostles....as Paul puts it in Eph.2:28, talking of God's household, the Church, *'built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets with Jesus Himself as the Cornerstone'*.

The faith for today is the same – it is one faith – the only faith. The only saving faith and that is the faith taught by the Apostles. Remarkable, isn't it? That after two thousand years with all the advances in learning...in medicine...in science... no matter how advanced or sophisticated modern man thinks he is, the fact of the matter is this. There is only one faith. There is no faith apart from this one faith – this Apostolic faith.

There is only one Faith, one Gospel and we are going to look at that in more detail next week, as Peter continues to build up our faith....checking the foundations, to enable us to identify, refute and stand against false teachers.