



KING'S CHAPEL

Daily Devotional - 1 Peter Study

Week 7 - Day 5

Approaching God

Read Psalm 77:10-15 - *Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds." Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.*

Prayer: Be still and quiet yourself. Take a few minutes to focus on God and to shut out distractions. Offer a simple prayer to start your time using the truth and promises in Psalm 77. What about God does the Psalmist reflect upon to steer his thoughts towards truth? How does he argue with his heart and where might you need to do the same this morning? Take a few minutes to open in prayer by considering the greatness and goodness of God.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - 1 Peter 5:12-14

Passage Introduction: *As Peter ends his letter, we are reminded that none of us get through the Christian journey alone. Peter had help and partners in the gospel. In vs. 12 he begins by noting the role of Silvanus, then reverts to a word of exhortation. As we wrap up our study of 1 Peter today, spend some time studying through these passages, learning about Peter's helper (Silvanus (also called Silas) and considering the priority of pursuing deep relationships with one another in the church.*

1 Peter 5:12-14 - **12** By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. **13** She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. **14** Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Acts 15:22 - Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers...

Acts 15:40 - but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

2 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Daily Study Questions

You may find it helpful to read through the commentary in “Resources for Further Study” at the end of today’s study to answer these questions.

Questions for Study

- Who does Peter say he entrusted his letter to? Refer back to the passages above and write down some things you learn about Peter’s partner in the gospel?
- Babylon (5:13) represented the height of godlessness and domination to the Old Testament prophets. What city might Peter be referencing here? (Hint: where is Peter writing from?)
- Who do you think “she who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen” refers to? Look up 2 John 1 and 13 to help with your answer (Hint: “She” is not a person, but a group of people, often referred to in the Bible in female terms.)

Questions for Meditation & Application

- Mark, my son (vs. 5:13) is referring to John Mark, mentioned throughout the book of Acts as another one of Peter’s co-laborer and Paul’s travel companion. He is also the author of the Gospel of Mark. What can we learn about the early church from the way Peter speaks of Silvanus, (“faithful brother”) Mark, (“my son”) and his greeting of choice (“greet one another with the kiss of love”)?
- How good is the modern church at prioritizing and pursuing deep relationships with one another? What steps could you take to grow in this regard?

Close in Prayer:

What has impacted you most in your study of 1 Peter? How has Peter challenged you to live a life of submission and holiness, to face difficulties, and to walk in humility? What are the words of Peter asking of you personally? Take some time to pray through your meditations

Resources for Further Study

1 Peter chapter 5 notes

Commentary & Notes on 1 Peter 5:8-14

One of the great advances in tropical medicine came when researchers discovered how malaria was spread. They had been trying to treat the disease for a long time, but it seemed hopeless. As fast as you helped one patient, three more were contracting the disease. Then, one day, someone realized that it was the mosquito, of which there were millions, especially in low-lying and damp tropical regions, that was carrying the illness this way and that. Once they realized what the real enemy was, new steps could be taken, such as draining the swamps where mosquitoes had been breeding near human habitations, and inventing new kinds of netting so that people could sleep without being attacked by the nasty little insects. Malaria is still very unpleasant, but it is far less of a problem now that we know what's causing it.

For most of the time in this letter we have been aware of persecution coming from the surrounding non-Christian culture. Part of it will have been unofficial, simply involving ordinary people sneering, criticizing, ostracizing or using occasional violence. Some of it, though, will have been official, as the local authorities took a hand and made life difficult for the Christians. How easy it will have been, as it still is, for the Christians then to demonize their visible, human opponents, to regard them as the real source of the problem. Now at last we see that this isn't the case. There is a real enemy. Like the mosquito, this enemy is seriously dangerous, particularly when ignored.

Peter, however, uses a more obvious animal as the image to describe the enemy. The enemy is like a roaring lion, looking for someone to swallow up. The word Peter uses is far more than simply 'eat'; it implies that the lion will simply gulp you down in a single mouthful. No time to protest or struggle. You'll be gone.

It's a terrifying image, and one which alerts us at once to the serious nature of the Christian life. Too many Christians soft-pedal the idea of actual spiritual warfare, of a real confrontation with a real devil. As C. S. Lewis said when writing about his world-famous book *The Screwtape Letters*, consisting of letters from a senior devil to a junior one on how to tempt people, some people dismiss the idea of a devil by thinking of a ridiculous little person with horns and hooves wearing red tights. They can't believe in a creature like that, so they decide they can't believe in the devil. Other people become so fascinated with the devil that they can think of little else, and suppose that every ordinary problem in life, or difficulty in someone else's personality, is due to direct devilish intervention. Lewis steers a wise path between these two extremes, and so should we. But perhaps, for many of my readers, the danger may be more in ignoring the tempter than in overdramatizing him.

The thing about recognizing the existence and power of the devil, and learning to see him behind not only temptations to sin but also persecution and suffering, is that this enables you to take the position which the rest of the letter has been advocating. When, two hundred years ago, many Western countries took a decisive move towards democracy, this was sometimes (not always) accompanied by a resolute dismissal of God, or public religion, from the civic and social stage. We were the masters now! But the danger with that, as has been apparent throughout the last two centuries, is that once you get rid of God you get rid, too, of the devil; and then you yourself, and

your friends, or your party, or your country, take the role of God, while your enemies take the role of the devil. And that leads to disaster.

The whole letter has been insisting, on the contrary, that the way to respond to attacks of whatever sort is with a firm but gentle faith, treating non-Christians with respect, living within the law (except, as in Acts, when it tries to force you into denying Jesus), behaving with humility and patience in all circumstances. The point is this. The actual, human opponents, even your fiercest persecutors, are not in fact the real enemy. There is a real enemy, and he will be using them. But if you resist him, staying resolute in faith and remembering that you are holding your bit of the line while your Christian brothers and sisters across the world are holding theirs, you will find that courteous and civil behavior, acting with respect and gentleness, will again and again win an answering respect from outsiders, even if they still don't understand what makes you tick.

The picture then falls into place. The devil will try to swallow you whole with persecution and other attacks. If that isn't working, he will try to tempt you to live in ways that are destructive of your faith and, ultimately, of your entire humanity (see 1.14; 2.11; and so on). That will go on for a while, and it may well (to put it mildly) be most unpleasant. But, as Peter explained in the previous chapter, this 'fiery trial' is there to do for us what the fire will do for silver and gold: to consume the imperfections and make the true metal shine the more brightly. That bright shining will consist of God's setting right of all things – eventually, as we know, and perhaps in various ways even in the present time. He will 'establish and strengthen you', and 'set you on firm foundations'. Many Christians, much of the time, feel insecure and wobbly in their faith. The promise of firm foundations is one to which we should cling with delight – especially as it is backed up by the promise that all power belongs to God (verse 11).

As so often with ancient letters (and early Christian letters are no exception), we find, at the end, just a flicker of a hint about the actual circumstances of writing. 'Silvanus', who is taking this letter to the churches in Turkey, appears to be the same person who is called 'Silas', one of Paul's companions in Acts ('Silas' and 'Silvanus' being variant forms of the same name), and likely the 'Silvanus' mentioned by Paul as being with him when he was writing 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Many commentators conclude when Peter says 'Babylon' in verse 13 this is really code for 'Rome', as in the book of Revelation. Mark, mentioned as 'my son', is almost certainly the John Mark we meet in Acts, and again at the end of Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy.

But the real point of interest in the closing verses is the one Peter highlights at the end of verse 12: 'this grace, in which you stand, is the true grace of God'. Using the letter as an angled mirror in which to glimpse what was going on in the churches to which it was addressed, it's safe to say that the small groups of believers in ancient Turkey must have been very concerned that the persecution which was now increasing meant that they were on the wrong road; that they had taken a false turning; that they had given their allegiance to Jesus as a false Messiah. Otherwise why would these things still be happening? Peter's solid reassurance has been based on scripture, based on his sense of how God's purpose was always going to work out, and based above all on Jesus himself. Hold on to his death and resurrection, he says. That's the sheet-anchor. He is the true Messiah, and one day he will be publicly revealed as such. This is the true grace of God; stand firm in it. And – the note that we all need, especially when the going is tough: peace. Peace to you from God. Peace to you in the Messiah!