



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

3 - 8 MAY 2021

INTRODUCTION

This week we start a new series of readings from the first letter of Peter. The Thoughts are based mainly on the text in bold type.

MONDAY - 1 Peter 1:1-12

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

³ **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** ⁶ In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, ¹¹ inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated, when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

Thought for the day

As we'll see later this letter was written as an encouragement to Christian churches who were starting to find themselves isolated from the society around them, if not actively persecuted. So it starts with this beautiful sentence of praise to God for all that he has done for those who put their trust in Jesus (v3-5). Peter speaks of 'new birth into a living hope', of an eternal inheritance with God, and God's protection and saving power. These are words and phrases to savour, especially during difficult times (v6). It's a call to us to reflect on the significance of our faith in every part of our lives.

TUESDAY - 1 Peter 1:13-25

¹³ Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. ¹⁴ Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. ¹⁵ **Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct;** ¹⁶ for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'

¹⁷ If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ Through him you

have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

²² Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, **love one another deeply from the heart.** ²³ You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For 'all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures for ever.' That word is the good news that was announced to you.

Thought for the day

It's always a huge challenge to be called to be holy, partly because for many of us it's difficult to see ourselves with the characteristic that 'holy' conjures up. We might aim to be good, honest, decent or public-spirited; but holy? It's a difficult idea but verse 15 reminds us why it's important - because holiness is a defining characteristic of God. We also know that our best guide to the nature of God is the life and teaching of Jesus. And one of Jesus' greatest characteristics was the love we're reminded of here (v22). So to be holy means to love deeply - still not easy but perhaps a bit easier to understand what we should be aiming for.

WEDNESDAY - 1 Peter 2:1-10

¹ Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'

⁷ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner', ⁸ and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Thought for the day

In this passage Peter uses a similar metaphor to the one we read in Ephesians (2:20) only two weeks ago - a spiritual house built on the cornerstone of Christ (v4-6) - but here expanded to include the idea of Christians being a holy (v5) or royal (v9) priesthood. This reference and those to a chosen race, a holy nation and God's own people show how comprehensively the church took over from the Jewish people their defining characteristics (v9). Until then the church had had no status (other than perhaps as a cult within Judaism), now they were to become the inheritors of God's love and mercy (v10). I wonder whether it's possible to have the same kind of sense today of the huge privileges we have inherited as a result of our allegiance to Jesus.

THURSDAY - 1 Peter 2:11-25

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

¹³ For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. ¹⁶ As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. ¹⁷ Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

¹⁸ Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the

credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. ²² 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

²³ When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Thought for the day

Here we get some sense of what the churches to whom Peter was writing had to put up with - probably not outright persecution but perhaps more likely suspicion and comment about whether their members were good citizens. So they are to live 'honourably' among their neighbours (v12); they are to accept all human authority (that is, Roman authority) as if it were Godly (v13-14,17). By analogy, Christian slaves are to accept unquestioningly the authority of their masters, however harsh (v18-20), thereby following in the way of Christ (v21-25). To what extent do you consider these instructions about those in power - both politically and personally - to be relevant or appropriate today?

FRIDAY - 1 Peter 3:1-12

¹ Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³ Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; ⁴ rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. ⁵ It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. ⁶ Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honour to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life—so that nothing may hinder your prayers.

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For 'those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'

Thought for the day

After addressing the attitude of citizens towards the authorities and of slaves to their masters, the letter now turns to wives and their husbands (v1-6). The basic position of subservience is familiar to us from last week's reading from Ephesians 5:22-33, but here a husband's obligation to his wife is even more perfunctory and patronising (v7). Unfortunately passages such as this have given licence to men within the church down the ages, and even into our own time, to treat wives and women generally as 'the weaker sex' and to discriminate against them in multiple ways. Depending on our own attitudes, we may find that what would otherwise be an attractive summary of Christian behaviour (v8-9) rings hollow in the context of the verses immediately before it.

SATURDAY - 1 Peter 3:13-22

¹³ Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵ but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. **Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.** ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in

the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Thought for the day

Again we get a sense of what the churches were up against - intimidation, malign behaviour, abuse (v14,16) - and how individuals should respond to their neighbours - readily, gently, kindly (v15-16). This is not the easy way out and may result in worse attacks and resulting suffering (v17). The model is clearly Christ (v18), to whose resurrection believers are joined through baptism (v21). How confident are we of being able to give non-Christian friends or family 'an account of the hope that is in us' (v15)?

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