

Sermon – 2 Peter 1 –Leroy Coote 6/6/2021

According to our government, the COVID situation in Victoria started as just a 7 day circuit breaker. However, on Wednesday lunchtime, this was extended to 14 days. This has created a scenario of uncertainty for those who owned small businesses especially in the hospitality industry. Not only that, anyone who is in casual employment has also been dealt an uncertain future as well as loss of income. Even before this, the fact that people have not returned to their pre-COVID workplace has created a degree of uncertainty as to whether we would return to our pre-COVID lifestyles. These are but one of the many uncertainties that will come across our lives. Boats adrift have an uncertainty because in a strong wind they do not know where they will drift to. For certainty with regards to where the boat ends up, there needs to be either an anchor or a captain to guide it. For us as a church, there is the uncertainty created by the existence of false teachers who preach a message other than the one in the Bible. These false messages include; (1) good works alone get you into heaven, and (2) following God will make you materially rich, just to name a couple. This leads me to wonder – where do God's people – the church – obtain their certainty and where is their faith anchored? Not only that, what should we be anchored to coming out of COVID? The answer is found in the word of God and its God-centred origins which is found in the first chapter of 2 Peter 1.

Today, we start a short series on the book of 2 Peter. It is a book that reminds us of the certain foundation of the word of God but most importantly, the certainty of the origins of our faith as well as the effect that the Christian faith is to have on our lives. I'm going to look at this under these headings:

- The certainty of where our faith came from.
- How our faith impacts our lives.
- What Peter does for our faith in this passage and....
- The long term historical origins of our faith.

What will become clear from the end of our time together is that the certainty of the origin of our faith rests in God and God's work throughout history. This is important for the church to grasp as it comes out of COVID so that it reboots from the right base.

Let us now proceed to **where our faith comes from** as shown in verses 1-4 which is my first point. It starts with a brief introduction as to who Peter is. We are told in verse 1 that he is a servant of Jesus Christ. This means that he is a disciple of Christ who has Jesus Christ as his master. Not only that, he is an apostle of Jesus Christ who has been sent by Jesus Christ post-resurrection to look after God's people after Jesus has left the earth and to declare the wonders of God. But note the order – he was a servant first and then an apostle. This is important because he was first a servant of Jesus Christ before he became an apostle. Now we know who Peter is, who is his message addressed to? His message is addressed to those who have received the precious gift of faith in Jesus Christ from the righteousness of God and Jesus as indicated in verse 1. This shows that our faith is not earned but given to us by a righteous God. By definition in the Bible, this is called grace and that term is used at the beginning of verse 2 because Peter in what is considered a normal greeting in letter writing at this time, calls for God's grace and peace (peace in the context of our relationship with God) to be ours in abundance. This is very generous of Peter but is consistent with how God's grace works? Why? Because God's grace is to be shared and not hoarded. Why? Because we are recipients of God's grace because we are in relationship with God which was the definition of knowing when this was written and because Jesus is our Lord. I hope and pray that

all those listening can declare that Jesus is their Lord from their hearts. If not, please send me an email so that we can have a conversation about your salvation.

At this point, what I will emphasise in this is that our salvation is powered by God. We are saved on God's strength and not our own. Not only that, verse 3 tells us that God's power gives us everything we need to live a godly life. By definition, godly life is a life that is pleasing to God and obedient to the commands of God. In other words, God's word and therefore, a godly life, shines through every sinew of our lives. And the source of living a godly life is not mystical because it is through our knowledge of him. Where do we get to know God from? God's word – the Bible. God reveals himself to us in his word and the more we read it the more we get to know him in person and when we meet with other Christians, we get to know the impact that God has on people's lives as well as our own. We know God also because he knew us first because at the end of verse 3 he called us by his own glory and goodness. What verse 3 also reminds us of is this – our knowledge of God is contained in its entirety in the word of God. This means that all the instructions needed to live a totally godly life are in the Bible and a totally godly life is what we are called to partake in. We live the godly lives that we are called to in response to the marvellous promises God gives us. Any why do we live that godly life? So that we can participate in the divine nature which means that we have escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. When we become recipients of faith, we don't escape the world but we escape what the world stands for. This means we live for God and live by his desires as spelt out in the word of God as that is the place where we find out our knowledge of Him. So therefore, there is a certainty as to where our faith comes from and that is from God and his son Jesus. It is a gift and God provides everything we need to live it out in a world that according to Peter is corrupt because of its evil desires. The world's evil desires are those desires that go against what God desires for not only his people but for the world that he created at the beginning of time.

Peter has just told that we have become recipients of faith not from our own doing but from God's doing. But what does that look like in practice, in the world and amongst the people of God – the church? We get a description of this in verses 5-11 under the heading of **how does faith given to us by a righteous God impact our lives** which is my second point. What we see in the first part of this section is that faith is not stagnant. Faith is the base of our walk with God but Peter suggests that our faith grows by adding a number of significant godly qualities to it. Listen to what verses 5-7 say, *"5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love."* All of these qualities when added to our lives increase the practice of holy living on our lives. This shows that having faith is not a nominal statement but is a characteristic given to us by God to show that God is visible in our lives. When you look at the list of characteristics listed in verses 5-7 none of them are invisible or to be hidden away in our heart but are to be used. God's goodness is to be displayed in the world through us. God's knowledge is to be added to our goodness so that we can be the best that God wants us to be. Self-control is to be added to goodness because we then live within the known ways that God provides for us so that our lives display godly living and the knowledge of God's word and as a result, avoids the corruption and evil desires of the world. Perseverance is added to self-control so that we stick at being faithful to God and grow in our faith. Perseverance leads to godliness so that godly living is something that is continuous and not a one-off act. But all these characteristics are not one-off acts because the next act that faith leads us to is mutual affection. This indicates that this is about caring for a body of fellow believers and liking them even if they are different to us. A deep faith in God will lead us to having a deep affection for each member of the body of Christ. At this point in time, Peter is writing to the local

church of a particular area and we will find next week that the reason for it is to combat the prevalence of false teachers that are present in the world around the church. With that in mind, we see the importance of mutual affection amongst the believers of the church to keep them together. But, there is one last thing that is added to the base of faith – that is love. Love God's way – binds the believers together as one cohesive unit for God because God wants his church close to each other as long as they are bound by the things of God.

What does this make the church? A cohesive growing unit that is effective and productive in their knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Growing in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ means not just learning the Bible off by heart but letting the qualities mentioned impact our lives so that we continue to become more Christ-like. Why? Because we are to possess these qualities in increasing measure meaning that they grow inside of us and impact those in increasing measure outside of us. In other words, it is hoped that when this passage is applied to our lives, we change to become more Christ-like. You see, friends, the more these characteristics are applied to our lives, the more Christ-like we become and that becomes noticeable to those inside of the church and outside of the church. Also, by adding these qualities to our faith, we confirm God's call on our lives and also, our welcome into the kingdom of God. So far, we have seen that our faith comes from God and grows in godly characteristics to the point that it becomes effective and productive in the eyes of God.

But why does Peter say these things to us? Simply to remind us which is my third of four points and we find this in verses 12 – 15 of 2 Peter 1. Peter promises to remind them of **the need to grow in their faith and that their faith comes from God**. Contextually, Peter is in his last years and there is every chance that this is his last chance to speak to the churches that he writing to as the language in this indicates that he is near the end of his life. I would hope that all who are believers in Christ as they near the end of their lives would encourage all to continue to grow in their faith as that is what will keep the church going long beyond our earthly existence. So Peter has so far made sure that he reminds us that our faith comes from God and that it is to grow but he lastly reminds us that he is an eyewitness to this message and it is from the Holy Spirit as mentioned in verses 16-21 which is my fourth and final point.

Peter grounds our faith in Christ because he was an eyewitness to the ministry of Christ meaning that he saw the foundation of our faith at work and was an eyewitness to the two events that led to our salvation – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But not only that, Peter affirms that the prophecy of which would have been the Old Testament though written by humans, came from God as it was carried along by the Holy Spirit. In the section and the whole of the passage, Peter grounds the faith of believer firmly in God and it is from God that faith starts. It is from God that faith grows. It is through God's people that we are reminded of God's word. What is this passage calling us to do? This passage is making sure that our faith is firmly anchored in God. This passage is making sure that we have a growing faith and not one that is stagnant – God calls all believers to have a growing faith as spelt out in this passage that is effective and productive until we leave this earth. Our faith grows when we add godly characteristics mentioned in verses 5-7 of 2 Peter 1. Let us all start to or continue to grow in our knowledge of and faith in God. Why? So that we can be the most effective Christians possible according to what the word of God says and that the reboot of our church starts from God's base and grows in God's direction.