

1 Peter 1

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Preacher: Frederick Hodgson

- [0 : 00] If you have your Bibles available, perhaps you would look at that passage I read earlier, that passage, 1 Peter, chapter 1.
- What value would you put on your Christian faith? Peter, in verse 7, says, Your faith is more precious, more valuable than gold.
- That's what he wrote to first century Christians who were scattered around the parts of the world, scattered around parts of modern day Turkey as a result of persecution.
- Now, their faith was more precious than gold. What about your faith? Do you look to your faith as being more precious than gold?
- Now, you need to understand, of course, that he was talking about the faith that he had preached, that he preached. And he described this faith as being exceedingly precious.
- [1 : 26] And he compared it to gold. Now, it seems that just about everyone values gold. Kings, governments, wealthy merchants, common people, they value gold today.
- They valued gold in Peter's day. And in times of tough economic crisis, the value of gold seems to go through the roof.
- Gold has great purchasing power. But Peter said that their faith was much more precious than gold.
- And he tried to describe the value of Christian faith by pointing to something that everyone recognizes is very valuable. And he said, your faith is even more valuable.
- So why is gold so valued? It's very beautiful. It doesn't rust like iron or tarnish like silver.
- [2 : 37] Soft, it's malleable. It can be made into beautiful jewelry. Not only is it beautiful, but it doesn't corrode.
- It's ideal for making into coins. And for many years, gold was used just for that. For making into coins that people could exchange and buy goods with.
- Gold lasts a long time. And Peter spoke about gold in that sense. But he actually went a stage further.
- And he said, well, even gold, actually, it perishes. And that is true. If you've got a gold ring, and you look at it several years after you've been married, you'll notice it doesn't look quite the same as when you first wore it.
- Gold does wear away. And in any case, gold loses all its value when we pass from this world.
- [3 : 47] We can't take our gold with us. It perishes in that sense. So faith is more valuable than gold from that point of view.
- Now, it's important for us to realize who it was that Peter was writing to. He was writing to religious refugees torn up from their roots.
- And such people experienced great financial and social and health deprivation as a result of being torn up from their roots, losing their work, losing their friends, perhaps having to leave lots of things behind in the country that they came from.

Gold would be very valuable to them, actually, in terms of paying for food, in terms of paying for accommodation, in terms of making friends.

Gold does have a great value. But Peter said that their Christian faith was even more valuable.

[5 : 08] Well, do you value gold? I'm sure you do. But do you value your Christian faith above gold?

Well, it might be that you've got some family jewelry that you've inherited and you keep it in a safe place. You don't easily sell it in a crisis because you value it.

But your Christian faith is much more valuable. You should prize your Christian faith and not allow it to be lost as a result of compromise.

The Christians he was writing to were in a position where they might well compromise their faith in order to get a little bit more wealth or maintain a little bit more wealth, perhaps gain friends, perhaps gain influence, perhaps gain more comfort.

They were tempted to compromise on their faith. And Peter said, No, value your faith above everything else.

[6 : 23] Perhaps he could have pointed to the proverb which says, Buy the truth and sell it not. So knowing the truth, having faith in the truth, growing in the truth is so very, very important.

Don't sell it for something which is temporal, something which is going to pass away. Now, Peter didn't merely compare the value of gold to their faith, but he spoke about gold that was without impurities.

He said that their faith was of more value than gold that had been refined by fire. Now, that expression might cause you some puzzlement, perhaps particularly those of you who are younger.

What was he talking about? Well, he was talking about craftsmen who heated up gold and a mixture of other elements, other metals, to a very high temperature.

And those of you who are in school, let me just say something about gold. You might come across the word density.

[7 : 49] And gold is a very dense metal. And strangely, it's getting on for being twice as dense as lead, twice as heavy as lead, if you like.

Now, lead is something that's very heavy. Gold is very much heavier still. So, when you heat up gold, lead, copper, lots of impurities with the gold to a very high temperature, the other metals simply float to the top and can be skimmed off, leaving the pure gold down below, which can then be used.

And, of course, that gold is much more valuable. If you like, it's got added value using a modern expression. And Peter said that their faith is of more value even than added value gold that's been treated by craftsmen in that way.

Now, do you realize that's true of your faith if you're a Christian today? It's of even more value than this extra refined gold.

Have you ever tried working out how valuable your faith is? Well, this passage is very helpful to us in working out just how valuable our faith is.

[9 : 16] And the value of genuine faith is brought out in the passage. The quality of the lives of these Christians that he was writing to demonstrated the value of their faith.

These Christians were being tested by the harsh knocks of life. Now, you'd expect that they'd be wearing long faces, constantly moaning, constantly complaining about all the bad things that were happening to them.

After all, they'd lost the popularity that they once had, the prestige, the power, the influence, and the wealth that they might once have had, all that had gone as they were there in that other country as a religious refugee.

They were misunderstood, ignored, abused, and ill-treated. But despite all of that, their faith glistened. It shone out.

They didn't wear long faces. They were hurt, yes. But look at verse 8. Though you've not seen Jesus Christ, you love him, and even though you don't see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

[10 : 39] Now, isn't that amazing? And if you're going through really tough times, wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to have this faith that rejoices and allows you to be filled with inexpressible joy, glorious joy?

These Christians did. They had that very precious faith. And if you exercise the faith that Peter's talking about, then you too can rejoice in this way, in the midst of your sufferings.

And who doesn't have problems in this life? Isn't that what we need when we're going through difficult times to be filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy?

So that was the first thing that gives a great value to Christian faith, the first thing that's brought out in this passage. But their faith not only produced a deep joy, but it produced and ensured hope and confidence.

Did you notice the confident hope or expectation that Peter had in verses 3 to 4? In verse 3, he spoke of his Christian hope, of their Christian hope, an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.

[12 : 19] Now he wasn't just talking about himself as an apostle, he was talking about these Christians, these ordinary people. He spoke about you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.

And if you've got the same faith that Peter is talking about, and you're exercising that faith, then you too can have that confidence, that strong hope, that delight in what God is going to achieve for you in that coming day of revelation when Jesus Christ appears and there be a new heaven and a new earth.

Now Peter spoke about an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you. Now sometimes you watch the TV and you hear about a very rich man who has a huge mansion, a huge estate, and he dies, and he passes it on to those who follow him.

But disaster of disaster, they can't afford to look after that house and it falls into ruin and decay. Well, the inheritance that Peter is talking about is one that can never perish or decay.

And that's the certain hope that these Christians had. The Bible has much more to say about this inheritance. Revelation talks about it, it's been an inheritance without tears, without death, without mourning, crying, or pain.

[14 : 10] And it's this inheritance which is guaranteed to those who have genuine faith. And in verse 3, Peter talks about it being a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Of course, he was raised from the dead after three days. He died, he'd been buried, and raised gloriously from the dead. And it's because Jesus was raised from the dead and seen by many witnesses that we ourselves can have this strong hope, this strong confidence in God.

So, why did Peter draw the attention of these Christians to this certain hope? It was so that they could see how valuable their faith was, how precious their faith was.

It spoke about God's plan to give them everlasting joys. And they actually start in this life, but it's just a foretaste of what's to go on in the future.

And our first hymn captured this glorious experience of those who have the same confidence, the same faith that Peter described. Remember the words, Saviour, if of Zion city, I through grace remember am, let the world deride or pity.

[15 : 38] And I'm sure in Peter's day the Christians were derided and scorned for their Christianity. Well, let the world deride or pity.

I will glory in thy name. Feeding is the worldling's pleasure, all his boasted pomp and show, solid joys and lasting treasure, none but Zion's children know.

So if you're going through tough times and you feel like throwing in the towel and going back on your Christian faith and compromising your faith, just to please your friends at school or your next door neighbour or whoever, don't give up, don't compromise that faith which is so precious, which is so glorious.

Now, do you realise that your faith is also so valuable because of who it was who gave it to you? The ultimate reason for your personal faith being of such great value is that it was actually produced by God working in you.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians, pronounced this, for it is by grace you've been saved through faith and this, not from yourselves, it's the gift of God.

[17 : 04] And in our passage, verse 3, in his great mercy he has given us new birth. Your faith is of such great value because of who it was that gave you that faith.

Now, it might be that you've got, you had some great aunt, uncle, grandfather or whoever who gave you some little trinket.

In and of itself, it might not have a great value but sometimes you finger it, you look at it and it reminds you of who it was that gave you that gift.

and your heart is stirred again with love because of who it was who gave it to you. Now, do you realise that it's God, the almighty, the eternal God who gave you that Christian faith?

It is the gift of God and you should value it because of that. but Christian faith is also very rare and something that's rare has a great value.

[18 : 21] Let's think about gold for the moment. That's very rare. You don't have lots of gold in your garden. Your neighbour doesn't have gold doors, at least I don't suppose he has, because gold is so valuable, it's so rare and it's the rarity of gold that adds to its value.

And if you're a Christian today, you've got something that's very rare. There aren't hundreds of people around you who've got this rare, this precious gift of faith.

It's of immense value and you should value it because of that. Look at Peter's response to these things.

Peter said, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And if you've got genuine faith, it should, it's so valuable that it should lead you to join in with Peter giving joyful praise and thanksgiving to God.

[19 : 47] So, do you have that genuine faith that Peter preached about? What exactly is the faith that he's speaking about?

Lots of people talk about their faith. They say, well, if it wasn't for my faith, I wouldn't have survived. When you question them about their faith, they can't really put their finger upon it.

It's some sort of vague feeling. But that isn't true of the faith that Peter's talking about. The faith he's talking about is not even a system of thought like political theories or scientific theories or even religious theories for that matter.

It's not confidence in the ideas of men, no matter how learned they are. It's not even confidence in the teachings of religious leaders or organisations.

It isn't that. Look how Peter put it in verse eight. Though you've not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him.

[21 : 05] The faith that Peter's speaking about is faith in a person. It's faith in Jesus Christ. It's faith in a historic person who is rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him.

It's faith in the one who was conceived by a virgin who was born in Bethlehem, who was brought up in Nazareth. It's faith in the one who went about doing good, exercising kindness to men and women.

It's faith in the one who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, who was raised from the dead and seen by many witnesses. It's faith in the one who was ascended, glorified in heaven, who now sits there at the right hand of God the Father, and who will come again in great glory to judge the quick and the dead.

It's faith in him, it's faith in that person. And the faith that Peter's talking about is that faith which is focused on one thing, one act, perhaps above everything else of that person, Jesus Christ.

It's faith that's focused upon his work at Calvary. that's what that precious faith is focused upon.

[22 : 29] It's focused on Christ who did those things that we could never do for ourselves. Look how Peter put it in verse 13. You know that it wasn't with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a land without blemish or defect.

He came into the world to save sinners like you and I. He came into the world to redeem or rescue men and women from their empty way of life that falls so far short of what God had planned for men and women.

He came to pay the price for you falling short of the glory of God. God, how do you know what the glory of God is like?

You see it in the life of Jesus Christ. None of his enemies could find any fault in him. Those that were sent to arrest him were absolutely staggered.

They couldn't achieve what they were sent to do because they were amazed at his gracious word. Think about the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, how it was that he prayed for his enemies when he was dying on the cross.

[23 : 59] Think about the humility, the kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ in washing his disciples' feet. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.

And we've all fallen far far short of this glory. This glory that the apostle John wrote about when he said we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only who came from the father full of grace and truth.

You know we've fallen short of that. I don't think anyone in this room can say they're absolutely full of grace I would be very surprised if there's anyone in this room who could say they're full of truth.

Jesus Christ full of glory demonstrating the glory of God and we've all fallen short far far short of that glory.

We've all fallen short like our fathers and Jesus came into this world to rescue us to redeem us from this empty way of life inherited from earlier generations.

[25 : 22] Later in his letter Peter talks about us going astray like sheep. Peter described us as being like sheep wandering from the way wandering into the path of judgment.

And I guess most people in this room have gone across the moors and you have seen sheep straying into the path of destruction. That was our condition.

Peter said you were like sheep going astray but he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree and by his wounds you have been healed.

He was speaking to these Christians there in Turkey these persecuted Christians but he's also talking to us is he not? Is it not true that we can say that by his wounds we've been healed?

Many of us later on tonight are going to celebrate that by his wounds we've been healed and he's the one that we must continue to believe in.

[26 : 32] He's the one that we must continue to trust. And it's faith in him that produces joy in the midst of difficulties and trials.

This is the faith that produces the confident hope of the world to come and gives rise to praise and thanksgiving. This is the faith that God gives.

This is the faith that is of more value than gold. But if you have that faith that precious faith it will be tested.

Peter reminded his readers of this. They were going through lots of trials. Life was hard and their circumstances created an instability and uncertainty for them.

There were strangers in the land in which they were living. Peter was aware of the difficulties they faced in an uncertain world. In verse 6 he writes this For a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

[27 : 47] Why do we face trials in this world? And who is without trials in this world? Verse 7 These have come so that your faith of greater value greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

So don't be surprised if your faith is tested to see whether it's real or not. From very early times faith has been tested.

You know of the man Job he lived in very olden times. There was no man like him and he drew the attention of Satan and he faced very severe trials lost his home family goods and health all because of his faith.

Remember how Satan came to God and said does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands so his flocks and herds are spread through all the land but stretch out your hand and strike everything he has and he will surely curse you to your face.

Job was distracted and troubled by his various severe trials trials but the outcome was that he emerged from his trials like purified gold.

[29 : 31] Faith is like that. It's valuable and it will be tested. When an employer takes on a new highly skilled worker sooner or later he'll give him a task that tests just how good he is that tests his metal if you like.

God is like that with the precious faith he's given you. Your faith will be tested not to destroy it but to confirm to you and to everyone else that your faith is genuine and that his work in you is real and substantial for his glory his praise his honour.

So do you have this faith which is of greater value than gold even gold that's been refined by the fire. It is of great value.

God gave it to you and it brings you to rejoice in times of difficulty and gives you a confident hope for the future. It guarantees an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade and it allows you to persevere though tested because it's God who's at work in you and he will shield you in the midst of the various trials and difficulties that you face.

But what if you haven't got that faith? What if your faith is very weak, very trembling, very uncertain? What if you are fainting under the hardships of life?

[31 : 14] What if you are on the point of giving up on your Christian faith because your faith is so small? How can you grow in your faith?

How do little babies grow? Little babies are very small but they grow. How do they grow? What do they do? Well, they cry for milk.

They crave milk. And you've got to have the same attitude towards the word of God. That word which came to you that you believed in, that you trusted in, that brought you joy and confidence in God.

You must go to that word. You must feed on it. You must read it. You must listen to it. You must meditate on it. You must digest it. And that's the way your faith, though small, will grow.

That's the way that you'll get faith. You must seek it. You must call to God for it. Now, Peter tells us that if we have this faith, no matter how weak, we should value it and give praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for all that he's done for us.

[32 : 41] Let's pray. Lord, we come before you and ask for your help, because so often our faith is tested and we find ourselves trembling and weak, and we need you to restore us and to increase that faith within our hearts.

We pray for any in this condition, salvation, and we ask that you would give them that precious faith and make them more aware of it, and we pray that you would help us all to value that very great gift that you gave, even faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we ask it in his name and for his glory. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.