



THE BEREIA PAGE

“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11

Faith Without Sight

From time to time, I have encountered people who thought believers in the time the New Testament was written had an advantage over them when it came to being confident about their faith. In various words, they would express this idea: “No wonder their faith was strong. If only we could see what they saw and hear what they heard.”

There are two problems with this outlook. First, many who did see and hear did not believe. For example, some saw Lazarus exit the tomb and went to tell some Pharisees who became more resolved to kill Jesus. Oh, and Lazarus needed to die, too (John 11.45-12.10).

Second—and more relevant to our question—as the gospel spread more widely, those who came to believe did so without directly seeing and hearing Jesus (cf. Luke 1.2; Heb 2.3). Peter acknowledged as much in 1 Peter 1.8-9, noting his readers’ love, belief, and joy even though “you have not seen him” and “do not now see him.”

They relied on the testimony of those who did see him—just as we do (cf. 1 John 1.1-3; Eph 3.4-5; etc.).

And their love for and faith in him was strong!

Strangers and Exiles (4)

David Anguish

As we think about how to live in a culture that no longer supports and may be hostile to our faith, we turn to the inspired counsel recorded in 1 Peter. Because their culture was antagonistic, Peter said the Christians he addressed were strangers and exiles (1 Pet 1.1, 17; 2.11). Thus, they *were* going to suffer, a reality he addressed directly by using forms of the words “suffer” and “suffering” more any other New Testament book. But, as noted in part 3, most of those occurrences are between 2.19 and 5.10—after he gave them a framework for making the right response from 1.3 to 2.18.

At the risk of oversimplification, I’ll summarize Peter’s teaching in that section with the word *salvation*, chosen because he used the noun (σωτηρία; *sōtēria*) four times (1.5, 9-10; 2.2) and the verb (σώζω; *sōzō*) twice (3.21; 4.18).

He recalled *the blessings of salvation*: the mercy they received, the new birth into a living hope they experienced, and the inheritance that awaited them. All were possible “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” completing God’s long range plan, as the prophets predicted (1.3-12).

He highlighted *the promise of salvation*: when they had endured suffering, salvation *would* be the outcome, a promise to be received when Jesus Christ is revealed.¹

He told them how to *live the life of salvation*: think right thoughts, imitate God’s holiness, continue to obey the truth, grow up spiritually, and treat others—even enemies—in the way that imitated Christ’s example of suffering (1.13-2.2; 2.11-25; 3.18-4.19).

They were to value *the privilege of salvation*: they were a chosen race, royal priests, and a holy nation, called from darkness into God’s light. Though once not a people, they were now God’s people, recipients of his mercy (2.4-10).

But, as vital as recalling the elements of salvation was,

Looking for God

Several years ago, I read Romans with the express purpose of seeing what it says about God. I noted specific statements, grouped repetitive or similar ideas together, and compiled a list of 39 things the letter teaches about God.

I recommend the exercise for every book. The Bible is about God. The Bible's main actor is God. It aims to teach us how to know God. It shows how to live in relationship with God. Even as we study it to learn other things, we need to make sure we don't forget to look for God.

Charles Spurgeon once said: "Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead."

— In J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (InterVarsity Press, 1973), 13-14. To read my list from Romans and more on this idea, see my sermon, "God Revealed," [here](#).

On Service & Ministry

In 1999, I re-worked some teaching notes into an article series on the NT meaning and use of *diakonia* and its cognates (e.g., 1 Tim 3.8-13; Mark 10.43-45; etc.). I recently updated and posted them on my website. You may read them on the page at this [link](#).

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. - Hosea 6.6

something else was more important for their endurance: their relationship with, allegiance to, imitation of, and dependence on God and his Son. We begin to understand this when we notice that Peter referred to—directly, indirectly, and with synonyms—God and Jesus, about 60 and 47 times, respectively.²

The resurrection of the *Lord Jesus Christ* (1.3) was instrumental to their new birth and living hope (1.3; cf. 3.21). His blood was the means of their ransom from their former futile ways (1.19; cf. 2.24). As they faced opposition, it was for his sake and honor that they were to faithfully endure (2.13; 3.15), but also his example they were to copy as they persevered (2.21-25; cf. 1.11; 3.16, 18; 4.1, 13; 5.1). He was the one who made their sacrifices acceptable (2.5) and who remained at God's right hand on their behalf (3.22).

Thus, Jesus was the one through whom they were to glorify *God* (4.11), ultimately the one whom Peter said provided and guaranteed their salvation and its blessings. Just in chapter 1, God is presented as having foreknowledge (v. 2), the Father (vv. 2-3, 17), merciful and the giver of new birth (v. 3), the one who guarded them for salvation (v. 5), the one who called them to and modeled the holiness they were to practice (v. 15), an impartial judge (v. 17; cf. 4.5), the one who raised Jesus and in whom they were to believe (v. 21), and the author of the abiding word they could follow and trust (vv. 23-25).

It is possible to become so focused on the particulars of our faith—the grace, redemption, ethical duties, rituals to be performed, etc.—that we forget what matters more. Our faith begins, revolves around, is empowered by, and ultimately finds its purpose in "know[ing] the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom [he] has sent." And the way to see the Father is to see Jesus (John 17.3; 14.9).

Peter's advice to Christians facing a culture more hostile than ours has become calls us to pursue that different way.

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Notes

¹ "Revelation" is also an important idea in 1 Peter; the verb (*ἀποκαλύπτω*; *apokaluptō*) and noun (*ἀποκάλυψις*, *apokalypsis*) appear three times each (1.5, 7, 12-13; 4.13; 5.1).

² In the English text, I counted 40 uses of the name "God" along with 15-20 references via pronouns or titles (e.g., "Father"); and 22 uses of the name of Jesus (and/or Christ) along with 22-25 references via pronouns or titles (e.g., "chief Shepherd").

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