

Nothing Ever Stays the Same!

- Things ain't what they used to be!
- We seem to live in a world of almost constant change - in every area - sometimes feel you can't rely on anything
- I remember learning this over the time I was in Motherwell, and I've learned something of the same here: **how much the area has changed:**
 - all the Mills that are no more, or that are flats...
 - the Linlathen site...
 - the Tesco at Kingsway West Retail Park that is now a huge Tesco!
 - in Motherwell, it was the demise of Ravenscraig, huge steel works - just as we were leaving they were working on reclaiming the land for housing...
- Things we use have all changed too - **modern gadgets, cars**, all different - perhaps better, perhaps not - old ones seemed to last longer - but they still eventually wore down, broke...
- And then of course there is the transience of life itself, so beautiful and yet so fragile....
- **All in all, there is a transience to life that often frightens us**
- Perhaps we find ourselves asking: **"Is there anything I can rely on?"**
- It was into a situation of transience that Peter wrote the letter from which we read earlier - he wrote to encourage his readers, to spur them on - to remind them of the joy that should be theirs
- Briefly pick up on **three** dimensions of what he said - for our encouragement!

Joy in our Heavenly Reward

v.3-5

- Passage filled with thankfulness and joyful celebration of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ
- Peter reminds his readers of the **"living hope"** that is theirs:
 - the prospect of **new life** won by Jesus' conquest of death at the resurrection,
 - the prospect of **eternity with God** in heaven,
 - the prospect of **possessing all the rich blessings** that God has in store for his people
- Peter is careful to make clear the difference there is from the kind of hope the world offers...
 - there is a **certainty** about these promises that means we can rely on them absolutely;
 - not **"hope"** as in **"maybe"**, but **"hope"** as in **"definitely"**
- **Look at the words he uses:**
 - God keeps these rich blessings - who can take anything out of his grasp?
 - they cannot "decay or spoil or fade away" - perfect condition, ready for when we arrive!
 - and we who are to receive these blessings are "kept safe", shielded by God's power - who can stand against his power?
- All of that certainty gives us good reason to be joyful - we have certainty in the face of uncertainty, hope in the face of hopelessness, new life in the face of death itself!
- **"Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (v.3)**
- Let us take joy in the certainty of all the great benefits God has given us!

Joy in Spite of Suffering

v.6-7

- Peter goes on to affirm that our joy in all these blessings should remain, even when things get tough - after all, the blessings, the prospect of heaven does not change

- Its possible Peter's readers were facing persecution of some kind
 - though the language used is sufficiently general that it could be any kind of hardship
 - *illness, bereavement, stress at work, loneliness, opposition and persecution for our faith - anything which makes us want to give up*
- Peter perceives, if not the full reason for the sufferings of this life, **purpose even in the darkness:**
 - he sees that suffering can often get rid of the dross, the extraneous clutter with which we often surround ourselves, help us realise what is really important....
 - ...and shining through that suffering most of all is their faith in Jesus Christ - which is much more precious than gold (we can't, after all, take gold, or a house, or even family, with us when we die)
- **Peter doesn't ignore their suffering, he doesn't pretend it will go away:**
 - rather he recognises that **compared with knowing the living Lord, the maker of the universe, Jesus Christ, God's Son, how much smaller that suffering appears**
- And so he encourages his readers, even in the midst of their suffering, to hone their faith, to see the dross pared off it, to grow in love and dependence of Jesus
- **"Then you will receive praise and glory and honour on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed."**
- May we too take that attitude when faced with suffering - **joy in Jesus**

Joy in Knowing Christ

v.8-9

- Brings us to third dimension Peter picks up on, in final two verses we read:
- The **focus**, the **reason** for our joy... that which brought us into the prospect of heaven and all God's eternal blessings is nothing less than **believing in, trusting in, having faith in Jesus Christ**
- Peter's readers were in the same position we are - they had never met Jesus when he walked the hills of Palestine, they'd never heard him teach or seen him heal the sick
 - they had merely heard from others - perhaps from Peter himself - of all that Jesus had done
- And they had come to put their trust in him, they had come to love him, they had come to rejoice in him
- **Have you ever been at someone's wedding and seen a couple glowing, alight, fired up with their joy in each other - just glowing with love**
- That's the kind of love these Christians had for Jesus - because he had first loved them, because he had come to die for them, to bring them salvation, all the rich and wonderful blessings that await us in heaven...
 - ...but most of all he'd come **to give himself to them**, to be their Lord and friend, to know them and to love them
 - and so **their joy found its focus in him**, in their relationship with him

Conclusion

- At the start of a new session, with the prospect of changes ahead:
 - Loveline coming, no Tim this year...
 - other things unknown - health, people who will pass away...
- Let us fix our attention on Jesus and on the joy he brings us:
 - he is our hope, our confidence, our purpose, our foundation
- **We come to a Lord who can certainly do what he has promised - who fills us with a "living hope", so that we can look forward with confidence and assurance - for God will keep us safe!**