

## 11.08.2019 Sermon – other letters

### Intro:

'Lord, help me to understand the meaning of this text'!!!

As I observed the text I could see a lot of overlaps in the message

Due to time...

What message do the letters have **in common** – but more importantly, what did it mean for *them* and for *us* too?

The general letters:

- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude

Just like we send letters today (though letters were expensive!), these 'general letters' were addressed to particular recipients. We could generalise that the letters were addressed to 'Christians' – Jews (greek or non-greek speaking) and Gentiles – i.e. **to us, therefore in one sense it's quite easy to understand, YET...**

### The Bible was not written *to us*, but it was written *for us*

Therefore, we need some necessary measures to 'fill the gap', such as 2000+ years, covenant, literature, history, worldview, culture, theology and language

Important to understand that 'some things **are hard to understand**' (2 Peter 3:15b-16) – so we need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us

**Step 1 = Pray** → Scripture inspired by one author!!!

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Define Christian – what does it mean to be a Christian?

Define faith – what does it mean to live by faith?

Illustration: our definitions differ (e.g. describe 'God'), but it doesn't necessarily mean one is right and the other is wrong. They all might be true yet different... I think the letters are similar in the sense that they all illustrate what it means to live by faith, i.e. While Paul says 'justification by faith alone' James emphasises 'faith in action' and Hebrews illustrates what faith is. Their writings aren't contradictory, but rather complementary!

Generally speaking the letters are relatively short – **so be encouraged and read!** And yet there is so much more...

Throughout today’s sermon we are going to be looking at **some common themes** and [be warned!] **it will challenge us for the better**. Also be encouraged for ‘the reason for the hope that you have’.

**James + 1 Peter + 2 Peter +Jude**

	<b>Background</b>
<b>James:</b>	Perceived as a threat to the empire’s stability, Christians began facing discrimination, violence, arrest and confiscation of property. Some were beginning to waver in their faith
<b>1 Peter:</b>	The Church began explosively. Jesus had risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven. Now the Holy Spirit had come to dwell within those who followed God. Multitudes of people were realising the condition of their lives and accepting Jesus as their Saviour. <b>Suddenly persecution broke out</b> against those who followed The Way. Several Roman Emperors, as well as the Jewish authorities, ensured that oppression against Christians was widespread, vicious and continuous.

**James:**

- We can’t just talk about our Christian faith to others – we must live it out for all to see
- Christians must also be a good example to others

*Faith in action* also doesn’t mean just ‘action’ as James says (quote) – i.e. methodology. But **praying**, ‘believing’ and ‘being still’ (action words!) to say the least, are a form of action that God wants to see in our Christian living.

**→It’s not the part I don’t understand that I have trouble with; it’s the part that I do**

**1 Peter:**

(Refer to Background)

Q) Can you think of a time when things became more challenging or uncomfortable as we tried all the more harder to live as a good Christian?

*Should we be surprised that our Christian walk is so topsy and turvey...*

- Peter wrote to encourage *them* to **persevere** in following Jesus
- Christ’s own suffering is **a pattern** for us to live by
- His resurrection gives us **hope** for the future
- Followers of Jesus are **pilgrims**
  - #tent → *Hebrews*;
  - Strangers of the world (1 Peter 1:1, 17; 2:11)

**■ We should live the life of heaven whilst here on earth**

**2 Peter:**

False teachers were ‘eloquent’ speakers

Q) **Are we careful not to be tempted to take heed to ‘eloquent’ things that are in fact not the Kingdom values?**

■ <b>Live holy and godly lives</b>	2 Peter 3:11	<b>No compromise with worldly passions!</b> Also see James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9
■ <b>Be diligent [to be found]</b>		

**Jude :**

Q) Are we alert against false teachings and ready to take a stand for the truth? Are we challenged (pay attention) in our willingness to 'contend for the faith'?

■ Contend yet show mercy	v. 21-23	Jude urged Christians to continue in godliness and love towards such people (v.4 and 8) – in some cases, reasoning with them, in other cases 'snatching them out of fire'.
■ A call to persevere		Similar to 2 Peter 3:2,3 #trials expected

Being a follower of God (being disciples of Jesus) or 'holy' doesn't mean for us to think 'oh we are the chosen ones' and thereby being ignorant of others – that's false security and selfish. To be holy is to be set apart – set apart **for a reason**. We are called to **a holy priesthood**, *Peter* says. In fact, at the end of the day, none of us have the ability for salvation. We are saved by His grace, and Jesus paid the price in our stead on the cross.

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### 2-3 John, 1 John, Hebrews

Just as Peter was telling *them* to **be revolutionary** – to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile in spite of persecution they were facing - *Christianity was unusual...*(1 John)

**We are in the world, but not of the world** (see John 15:19-20)

This has many implications for us as **Christians** who are [in the world, but not of the world]

It means that we are to **reach out** (i.e. **be holy, salt and light**), not *seclude* ourselves.

**Christianity is exclusive** – **only Jesus** – while also *inclusive*, i.e. **John 3:16** says **God so loved the whole world**.

*2 and 3 John* – When John wrote these letters, he would have seen what worked and what didn't work over many years as a Christian pastor/elder.

God commanded us to love each other – and all the letters have this message in them. *2 John* is a case where loving each other doesn't necessarily mean being hospitable to everyone, that is, encouraging and supporting teachings not of God. The idea is that some false teachers were abusing the kindness of Christians. True love and kindness does not compromise on the truth.

For example: [in my DTS] how much would you have to hate someone to withhold the truth from them – point was to **reach out** and show God's love to people! Another instance is where we are to **contend for our faith** – as *Jude* points out. We contend because we love. The definition of Love is very different to what we might expect in our society today, where much is owed to **our feelings** – whereas it's more like a decision. Both reaching out and contending for our faith is an act of love, where love does not **compromise** the truth.

How would you describe the society we live in in 2019?

Selfish!  
Tolerant!  
Obsessed!



We live in a **postmodern society** – which has the following words attached to it: 1. **Compromise**

2. **Feeling**

- Where 'what I think is right' is 'right'; I do what I feel like doing.
- The **religious hypocrisy** in Amos (even in the days of prophets!) is very similar to how people adopt a mix of beliefs (like syncretism) and compromise between their so-called faith in God and faith in other things.

Today, we need to **seek** God (**seek** His revelation) and not compromise, but walk in/by faith and in obedience.

**2 Peter 1:20-21**

*'Knowing this first of all, that no **prophecy** of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men **spoke from God** as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

As in **3 John**, the message is to be kind, be hospitable, extend grace to faithful servants.

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I think it's easy to forget both - and the implications that follow:

**1. We are in the world**

We are prone to being tempted + sin (e.g. 2 Peter 2:20)

Missions – be a witness! To testify is to remember!

Love each other

Hope

- **Physical and spiritual persecution**, i.e. suffering (faith compromised) and false teaching (truth compromised)
- [admonitions on] **How to live (present) in view of the LORD's coming again (future)**

**2. We are not of the world**

→ See 1 John 2:15-17 → James 4:4, 1 Peter 4:2

**1 John:**

Basics of faith / core of Christianity

- Be obedient
- Hold to truth
- Abide in His love

**Hebrews:**

**We are expected to grow up, go on, mature**

- Don't turn back; bear fruit - see 2 Peter 2:20 (sin that so easily 'entangles')

- Venturing even further into the life of faith

Practicing our faith (=obedient action) and 'these qualities' are really important for Making your calling and election sure (2 Peter 1); the assurance as we find ourselves learning...(see 1 John Intro).

The need to build Christian character #faith

- Live by faith (faith has always been key to life); faith & everyday living; Faith is not merely believing about, but is (=) obedience Hebrews
- Q) What can we learn about faith, i.e. examples of many adventurers in faith who followed God wholeheartedly (Hebrews 11)
- 2 Peter 1:8, 3:18

→ **Be an example to the world, radiating Christ's example!**

Hebrews teaches that in our faith and in our everyday living, we should imitate the example of Christ - Heb. 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:21

→ **Practice your faith**

Mt. 7:24

Look to Jesus, not the storm (temptations etc.)

→ 'good' practice makes perfect!

1 Peter 4:1-2 **Christ suffered**; no longer for human passions but for the will of God

Feeling vs Faith	Compromise (False teaching)
E.g. worldly passions and desires (1 Jn 1:15-17)	E.g. 1 Jn 1:6, 2:4

- Jesus the author and perfecter of our **faith**
- Jesus is **the way, the truth and life**

Further apply:

- **Read** the Bible, but also let the Bible read you!
  - Q) Do we let the word govern our lives
  - The word of God is living and active – His words speaks to us in a fresh way (while the truth of the gospel stands always); His mercies are new everyday
  - **are we ready to obey; It is easy to understand, but much more difficult to put into action (James)**
- See [how it points to] Christ ; **increase our faith** → first step is to **pray**
  - **But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)**

Help sheet:

1. We are in the world	Ref.	Application
<b>Missions</b> – be a witness! To testify is to remember!	<b>1 Peter 2:5</b> →that they may see your good deeds (1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:16) →that God may be glorified (1 Peter 4:8-11)  <b>We must testify to the truth</b> We were eyewitnesses (2 Peter 1:16, 1 Peter 5:1) Peter, James, John – servant/s of the Lord – disciples Testimony = to ‘recall these things’ (2 Peter 1:15), remember (2 Peter 3:2) <b>2 Peter 1:20-21</b> <i>‘Knowing this first of all, that no <b>prophecy</b> of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men <b>spoke from God</b> as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.</i>	■ <b>[called to]</b> <b>Be holy</b> Called to be a holy priesthood (2:5) → to be <b>salt and light!</b>
<b>Love each other</b>	<b>James 2:8, 1 Peter 4:8</b>  <b>Jude 21-23 Contend yet show mercy</b> Jude urged Christians to continue in godliness and love towards such people (v.4 and 8) – in some cases, reasoning with them, in other cases ‘snatching them out of fire’.	
<b>Hope</b> (which determines our present behaviour, especially in our <b>situation in the world</b> ) - <b>Physical and spiritual persecution</b> , i.e. <b>suffering</b> (faith compromised) and <b>false teaching</b> (truth compromised) - <b>[admonitions on] How to live in view of the LORD’s coming again</b>	■ <b>Patience in suffering</b> - [Believe in] Eternal gospel (joy) in the temporary world (suffering) <b>#hope #tent</b> - “Repent, for the kingdom is near” → 1 Peter 4:2,7 (see 2 Peter 1:9 God’s heart...patient...)	
<b>2. We are not of the world</b>		
Walk in <u>truth</u> (and Light)	<b>James 1:17</b>	No compromise
Abide in His <u>love</u>		
Be <u>obedient</u>	<b>2 Peter 3:11</b>	<b>Live holy and godly lives</b>
<b>The need to build Christian character</b> <b>#faith</b> - <b>Live by faith</b> (i.e. key to life); faith is everyday living	<b>2 Peter 1:5-11</b>	Faith is not merely believing about, but <i>is</i> obedience Faith = obedience. Faith is <b>doing</b> .
- <b>Testing of your faith</b>	■ Testing of your <b>faith</b> (1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7) → consider it pure joy (also 1 Peter 4:13)	
- <b>Follow Christ’s example</b>	<b>1 Peter 2:21, 3:18,</b>	