

1 Peter Chapter 1 v 17 - 21

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[0 : 0 0] Can you turn, please, to 1 Peter, Peter's first letter, and chapter 1. So reading from 1 Peter and chapter 1.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance. 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 into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

[1 : 3 6] In all this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

[3 : 1 2] Even the angels long to look into these things. Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

For it is written, Be holy because I am holy. Since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

For you know it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him, you who believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

[4 : 45] Thank you, Frederick. Frederick read from 1 Peter in chapter 1, and that's where we've been studying in our evening meetings before Christmas, and then we had a little bit of a break for Christmas, New Year, and so on, and then we came back to the passage, to this chapter.

Peter, last week, when we looked at verses 13 to 16, where there's that change in Peter's letter, as he begins to talk about action. He's been talking about all that God has done for us, the wonder of the promises of God, the comfort that they bring to us in the midst of trials, the churches to whom Peter was writing, the Christians were persecuted, struggling, finding life tough and difficult, and so God's word had been that comfort to them, but now is the time for action.

And so we're going to be looking together from 13 through to 21, particularly 17 and following. I'm sure you've come across the saying, when in Rome, do as the Romans do.

It's apparently attributed to a great Christian of over a thousand years ago by the name of Saint Ambrose, and it's very practical advice, isn't it? Wherever you find yourself in the world, you should follow the customs of that country or of that city and its citizens.

One of the things that very many English holidaymakers do when they go abroad is totally ignore that advice. If you find somebody on holiday in Spain or Greece or Italy, they always go to an English-themed pub to have their dinner.

[6 : 29] They buy only British products in the supermarket. They never speak the local language, preferring to shout loudly and speak slowly in English, expecting to be understood.

And wherever they go, of course, they stick out like a sore thumb, but that's probably just the sunburn. So given the common experience of English people abroad, it should be much easier for us, English and British Christians, to obey Peter's instruction here in verse 17.

Live out your time as foreigners here. Live out your time as foreigners here. And that command that he gives, that instruction he gives, really is a follow-on from and a fleshing out or a beginning to flesh out what he'd written at the end of verse 16, 15 and 16.

Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written, be holy since or because I am holy. And following on from that, we have since.

Therefore, because of. This is how you're meant to live. To be holy in all that we do, to be holy as God is holy, means and implies at least that we live out our time as foreigners here.

[7 : 51] That theme of living as a pilgrim or living as a sojourner, if you have the AV, is the sense of the word. It means someone who's just passing through a particular place.

They're on their way somewhere else and they're just for a time living and dwelling in the neighbourhood, as it were. That theme crops up more in the monospace in the letter.

Later on in chapter 2, in verse 11, Peter again writes, Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles. And he uses the phrase there, exiles, which, if you were listening carefully, is at the very start of the letter where Peter writes to God's elect exiles.

And so together, foreigners and exiles are how he describes not only God's people but how God's people are to live. We are to be who we are.

We're to not be what we're not, but we are to be who we are. And the reality that the Bible teaches us is that the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, the believer, is not a civilian of this world.

[9 : 03] We are only passing through this world. It's not our permanent home. It's not our place of residence where we shall spend all eternity. We are on our way to a better country.

The same as all God's people have been. Hebrews chapter 11, the writer describes and speaks about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the Old Testament saints, how that they were looking for a better country, and he says, a heavenly country.

That thought that we are passing through and that this world is not our home, that we are foreigners, on our way to a heavenly country, is again something that Paul picks up when he says in Philippians chapter 3, verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven.

So you and I, if we are Christians, we are foreigners in this world, we are pilgrims in this world, and we are citizens, firstly, foremostly, of heaven, of the kingdom of God.

But as Peter will reveal as we go through the letter, that does not mean that the Christian is to be a careless or bad citizen in the way that we live in this country or whatever country we find ourselves in.

[10 : 20] Quite the opposite, in fact. As Christians, we are to be model citizens of the country in which we live. We are to be loyal subjects, faithful and law-abiding wherever we reside.

There in chapter 2, verse 13, a little after he's spoken of the believer as a foreigner and an exile, he says, submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority, whether to the emperor as a supreme authority, or to governors who are sent by him, that's the Lord, to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

So we are citizens, not of this world, but we are to live out and be the very best citizens we can be in this world. We are pilgrims, we are foreigners who are passing through, and we are to live as foreigners.

We are to live as pilgrims. What does he mean by that? What is he saying to us? Well, as I've already said, it's really exactly what he's been telling us earlier on.

In verse 14, as obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you found when you lived in ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

[11 : 40] We are to be different. To be holy means to be set apart, to be set apart as belonging to God, to be separated unto God. But that's not just something that is a reality in the sense that we belong to God.

That's the wonderful thing that takes place. We become Christians spiritually. We become God's children. We become part of his family. We belong to him. It is also to be the way that we live as those who are God's children, those who are different from those who are not God's children.

We are citizens of heaven. And we are to live, therefore, as those who understand this and not any further or longer in ignorance.

Do you notice that? Verse 14, Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. That is the situation. That was our situation before God in his grace set us apart, separated us to himself, brought us into his family, made us one of his children, gave us faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We were ignorant. We were ignorant of God, ignorant of our sin and of ourselves, ignorant, really, of the most important truths about life, the universe, and everything.

[13 : 01] But now, we are not in ignorance. That's what's happened. As Peter has been speaking about all the things that God has done for us, our inheritance, our new birth, the Lord Jesus, his resurrection from the dead, that we are going to heaven and we have an inheritance there and so on.

What we know affects what we do. Knowledge empowers us. That's why those powers which seek to dictate or to control, whatever they are, will seek to remove knowledge.

knowledge. That's why the teachings of Islam under the Taliban and Burkina Faso, sorry, Boko Haram and so on prevent girls from learning, from being taught.

They don't want people to know. Knowledge empowers us. That's what Jesus said, didn't he? John chapter 8, verse 32. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

Knowledge of truth is life transforming. And in that place of ignorance, of course, we were those who were conformed to live our evil desires.

[14 : 19] That's what he says there in verse 14. Do not conform when you lived in ignorance. We follow the pattern of living that our lusts, our sinful desires set before us.

We were ignorant of living in any other way. We didn't know any other way to live. We had no understanding of how to live in any other way. We simply conformed to the pattern of following our sinful, selfish desires.

Living just like everybody else. Everybody else did that. Everybody else who was ignorant lived to follow the conforming pattern of living for self, of pleasing self, of doing the things that they wanted to do and we just followed the crowd.

We were just sheep following the rest. But, since coming to know God as our Heavenly Father, since coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, since coming to the knowledge of the Holy Spirit who has sanctified us, remember that, in verse 2, that means set us apart for God, since coming to this wonderful understanding of God and His grace, our lives are changed in every single way.

Notice that, again in verse 14, sorry, verse 15, just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, not just in your religious duties, not just as you go to church, not as you read your Bible and pray, but in everything.

[15 : 50] Live out your time as foreigners here. Every part of our lives is affected and touched. And it's therefore not just our understanding, of course, that is altered.

It's not just that God in His grace has opened our eyes to see the wonder of who He is and what He's done, but also we ourselves are entirely changed, not just in mind, but in the whole of our being.

We are new creations. We've read that there in verse 3. In His great mercy He's given us new birth. We are those who live a new life, a holy life, one separate from those who still live in ignorance and conformity.

So, we are foreigners, meaning that we are set apart for God, meaning that we are not to conform to the patterns before in the way we lived because now we know God.

The world around about us constantly calls for conformity. The world around about us always wants men and women to fit a particular mould and wherever that has taken place in governments and in countries, it has always brought an oppression and suppression of Christianity.

[17 : 11] So, if you take communism in the Soviet bloc or the right wing of Nazi Germany, you see again and again it begins by saying conformity of thinking and living is good for everybody, the whole of society, but it ends up by saying either you conform to our way or we'll destroy you.

That's exactly what happened in both those instances and others since then. And dear friends, we are living in our present situation in the United Kingdom, in Europe, in a society where there is a growing insistence upon conformity to a way of thinking and a way of behaving which goes contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How that will end, we don't know, but we know that we are different. The Christian has always been and must always be a non-conformist.

I don't just mean that he can't go to the Church of England because he can if it's a Bible believing Church of England and they love the Lord there. No, I mean this, Romans 12, verse 2, do not conform to the pattern of this world.

Christian is a non-conformist. We are not to conform to the pattern of this world. That doesn't mean that the Christian is an anarchist. It doesn't mean that the Christian is somebody who says we don't recognize any law over us because we're citizens of heaven.

[18 : 39] All of the world's laws have no part. It means rather this, that we conform to a very different set of laws. Not man-made, but God-given.

And so Romans 12, 2, continues. It starts with, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but goes on to say, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will. So living the Christian life is to live a life which is a foreigner in this world, separate from the world, different from the world, but holy.

A life which is set apart for God's will and for his laws and his commands. Why should we do that? What is the motivation to do that?

Why should we be holy? Because God is holy. Why should we keep his law instead of the laws of this world? Is it because we're afraid of reprisals?

[19 : 49] Is it because we're afraid of prosecution or rejection? No. There are several motivating factors for us to seek to live holy lives in all that we do.

There are several motivations to drive our non-conformity, but they all flow from what we've come to know about God. And that's what Peter goes on to speak about now in verses 17 through to 21.

He talks about what we know about God since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially. This is what you know. And then he goes on and talks about other things too.

And I want to just pick out three simple things in these verses 17 to 21 which motivate us to live holy lives, motivate us to seek after doing God's will, motivate us to be different from the pattern of the world and to seek to follow the pattern of the Lord.

The first one is this. We know God is a prayer answering father. We know he's a prayer answering father. Since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

[21 : 09] To call on God, our father, is what we do every time we pray. It means to speak to him, to ask for his help, to look to him for grace, to trust him and to pray.

And the reality is this, that we have a God who is our heavenly father who answers us like nobody else, who answers our prayers in such a loving and gracious way that we cannot help but find that our lives are different.

Here's what Jesus says of God's fatherly care. Matthew 7 verse 11, If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?

You call upon a father. And what makes him so very different is not only that the gifts he gives are perfect and good, but also that he's a God who deals with us in a way which is very different to the way that the world deals with us.

Notice that he is the one who judges each person's work impartially or justly, fairly. The reality is that every single day we are judged by the world's standards.

[22 : 30] We're judged by the world's laws. And the world judges the Christian unfairly. Not just the Christian but all people. The world's judgments of people is wrong because it's based upon human understanding, human judgment, which is faulty and sinful.

Christians throughout the ages have been treated unfairly and judged unfairly by the world. That's one of the problems that has arisen amongst the Christians to whom Peter is writing to.

In chapter 3, 14, he says to them, even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened.

Christians who are suffering for doing what is right. Later on, verse 17, that same chapter, for it is better if it is God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Here was the problem. Christians living in the first century were seeking to follow the Lord and to please him. They were seeking to be upright in the way that they lived. But because the world in which they lived was unjust and unfair, they were at a disadvantage.

[23 : 43] That's always been the case. That still is the case today. So because as a Christian we do not conform to the world's judgments, we too will be persecuted.

We too will be rejected, mocked, ostracized. So we've seen in recent years there have been several believers who have faced such things.

Marriage counselors, teachers, registrars and others who have been sacked or not had their contract renewed because they have not conformed to teach or to carry out same-sex marriages or to hold a biblical principle in the place of work.

That has always been the way. We shouldn't be surprised by that. The world judges differently but here is a heavenly father who judges us impartially, not as the world judges.

We know that our lives are answerable to him. That's why we're to live out in reverent fear before God. We've got a higher judge to whom we are accountable.

[24 : 50] Remember when the disciples, the apostles were called before the Sanhedrin, they were warned and told with threats, don't you dare preach about Jesus. What do they say? It's better for us to obey God than men.

And so we are as Christians. We obey God. Why is it better to obey God than men? Because men can only bring temporary punishment against us. God can and will bring eternal punishment against those who break his commandments.

We have a high judge. He's our father though, who we call upon. He's the one who meets our needs. He's the one who loves us with a wonderful, loving justice.

And so we live out this world knowing that we are heading home to be with him and we're heading home to face his blessing, his acceptance.

The world may not accept us, but God does accept us. Secondly, we see as well that one of the reasons and motivations why and what we know about God that moves us to live holy lives is this, that he, this God, has given us a precious saviour.

[25 : 59] He's a prayer answering God and he's given us a precious saviour. verses 18 to 20. Why is it that the people around about us who are not Christians, why is it that they still live in ignorance?

Why is it that those who live sinful lives following the evil desires, conforming to the evil desires, why is it that nobody has taught them that way of life which is different?

Who taught them to live this way? Who taught them to be sinful? Well, here we're told. For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver and gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors.

The people around about us live following the standards and patterns that have been passed down to them. Their parents, grandparents, society, their ancestors.

Our parents have an amazing and incredible influence upon us, for good or for ill. Our parents influence us and shape our lives, our beliefs, our actions, either because we mimic them and follow the same way that they lived, following their thought patterns, following their practices, or of course, as some do, because we totally reject their way of life and rebel against it, either in our own ignorance or pride.

[27 : 29] But here's what Peter says. Here's what the Bible says about man-made traditions, man-made religion, man-made living, man-made laws.

He says they're all empty. The people that Peter was writing to were not people who had no religion before they became Christians. They were very religious.

You read about it in Acts. They had Athens. They had temples everywhere, shrines everywhere. They had gods and sacrifices and priests everywhere. The people of the world have always been very religious, wherever they've been.

But every religion, every religion, apart from the religion, which is the true religion of Jesus Christ and God his father, is empty. It's man-made.

It's handed down. culture and belief is a product of every person's sinful corruption, which takes them down the wrong route in the wrong way.

[28 : 31] In Jeremiah 16, verse 20, God asks the question, do people make their own gods? Yes, but they're not gods. gods. They're empty.

The god of Islam, the god of Hinduism, the god of Buddhism, the god of atheism, the gods of materialism, the gods of consumerism, all these things are empty.

We only have to look around about us and see that because of what product they produce. One of the great sadnesses, one of the tragedies of the world is that men and women live in ignorance, following patterns that are handed down to them, which are empty and ignorant.

But here's what's happened, says Peter. The believer, the believer who is living in that life, the believer who is following after that pattern, who is conforming in that way, the believer has been redeemed, rescued, ransomed from that and ransomed at a great price with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

We were in captivity to the way that everybody else lived because we're ignorant and powerless to break free. But Christ, in his loving kindness and mercy, paid the price to redeem us and rescue us from that captivity, to bring us out of it, bring us out of the world, bring us into the life of life with God, knowing God.

[30 : 00] That was God's plan right from the beginning of time. We see verse 20. He, that's Jesus, was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Jesus, the Son of God, Christ, the Son of God, before the world was made, was set apart, separated as it were, to become the Savior, the precious Savior of men and women who were trapped in ignorance and evil.

And he came. He came in the last days. He came into the world. What for our sake? We thought about that verse just before Christmas as we were thinking of why did Jesus come into the world.

He came to be the Lamb without blemish. All of the Old Testament sacrifices that God instituted were all pointing to, leading up to this time when Jesus would come, the perfect, precious Redeemer.

That's exactly what he did. He was chosen before the creation of the world, revealed in these last times for your sake. We're to live lives for God because we have been set free, redeemed from the slavery of conforming to the empty way of life handed down to us.

[31 : 24] When the American Civil War came to an end, emancipation, freedom was given to every African American slave throughout the nation. But for many of those slaves, they had been born into slavery.

Their parents were slaves. Their grandparents were slaves. It's all they'd ever known. But some of them, they just couldn't cope with how to be free.

They didn't know what to do. And so the majority of them remained with their masters as servants, hired workers, free in name, but really just carrying on, living the way they had lived before.

That must never be the case for the Christian. That must never be the case for those who've been bought at such a high price, whose freedom has been secured with such a precious gift as the very blood of the Son of God.

We have been saved for liberty, for freedom. How can we follow the patterns we used to follow? How can we follow the empty way of the world?

[32 : 30] How can we go and be just like those who are in ignorance? When such a great work has been done for us and paid for us by our God so that we might live holy lives of nonconformity in the world?

And finally here, in verse 21, we have just the final reason to motivate us to live in that freedom and in that way of holiness.

And it's this, because the God that we've come to know is a promise-fulfilling God or a promise-keeping God. Through Him, that's Christ, you believe in God who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him and so your faith and hope are in God.

When the Lord Jesus Christ laid down His life as that precious Lamb, as He died upon that cross and suffered in our place as our atoning sacrifice, and when He was buried in the tomb, God didn't abandon Him.

God didn't forget Him. God didn't leave Him. But rather, as we know, God raised Him from the dead just as He had promised He would.

[33 : 56] Peter, himself, on the very day of Pentecost, this may have been what was going through his mind as he was preparing this letter, thinking on that day many decades earlier, he had been preaching in Acts chapter 2, speaking from Psalm 16, a psalm of David.

He pointed to the fact that that psalm was God's promise that the Messiah would not remain dead. He said this, you will not let your Holy One see decay.

And Peter went on to explain to the crowd that that was not talking about David whose tomb was there in Jerusalem, but talking about the Christ, the Savior, who would be raised up again on the third day.

Yes, here we have a God who keeps His promises and faithful. We read there, not only He raised Him up from the dead, but He glorified Him.

On the very night before the Lord Jesus was betrayed and crucified, He prayed. That John 17 wonderful prayer prays for the disciples. There, He prayed for those who would come to faith through the disciples' gospel.

[35 : 06] That's us, but He prayed first of all for Himself. And this was part of His prayer. Father, glorify me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began.

Peter tells us He raised Him from the dead and glorified Him. Glorified Him. Jesus had asked and He did it. The God who raised Jesus from the dead and glorified Him is the one in whom we've put our faith and hope.

Your faith and hope are in God. Yes, we believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who took our sins at the cross. We believe that He has risen from the dead alive forevermore and our faith is in Him to be our precious redeeming Savior.

But, says Peter, your faith is not just in Jesus, it's in the God of Jesus who raised Him from the dead. Your faith and your hope are in one who is dependable, who fulfills His promises, who keeps His word.

He will never fail His children or forsake His children. He is dependable and trustworthy just as He dealt with His one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, fulfilling His promises towards Him, so He shall deal with all His children in the same way.

[36 : 24] Are you one of God's children? Are you one of those for whom Jesus died? Are you one of those who's come to know and trust in Him, the God who raised Jesus from the dead and first of all sent Him into the world to die for you?

Then you have a God and Father who will care for you, who will fulfill His promises to you and His purposes towards you just as He did His only begotten Son. Dear friends, we are heading towards resurrection and glory.

You and I as well are heading towards resurrection and glory. Our lives are set upon that goal, that price.

So again, why would we want to live like those whose only hope is in this world? Why would we want to live like those whose only faith is in the here and now?

What can be seen and touched? That which is passing and temporary. What can be possibly compared with living for God? Though it's costly and painful at times, it's got to be worth it.

[37 : 30] To be holy and live a holy life seeking after His will is worth it. Because we shall find the fulfillment of what God has promised us, an inheritance in heaven, a better heavenly country, a home in which we shall dwell with Him forevermore at the end.

The Apostle Paul was a man who knew great difficulties, trials, sufferings, problems in his life. But he had to set before him that one desire that he should live for Christ.

And so he wrote to the believers in 2 Corinthians 4. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Let's sing together as we close. Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes through eternity.

[38 : 46] It's on the overhead above our heads. And we're going to sing that and stand. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will.

And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.