

1 Peter Chapter 1 v 1 & 2

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Date: 01 November 2015

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- [0 : 0 0] 11. And at the end of the chapter, Paul has been writing to the Romans, to the Christians. In fact, really all the way through this letter so far, he's been building up to talk about the gospel and what Christ has done for us, the effects and the power of sin. And the work of the Spirit bringing us into that place of no condemnation. Talking about the unbreakable love of God towards us and the Lord Jesus in Romans 8. Then 9 and 10, he particularly talks about God's sovereign choice and salvation. And he talks about Old Testament Israel as well. And then before he goes on to bring some very clear teaching about the body of Christ, what it is to be the church, he breaks out into this glorious hymn.
- [1 : 0 5] That's what it is. Often Paul does that. If you read the letters he writes, he's thinking about the gospel, he's thinking about Christ and the Holy Spirit within him, of course, who's illuminating and teaching in one sense and guiding his thoughts, breaks forth into praise. So verse 33, Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him, through him, to him, are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. And whenever we stop, as we need to do, it's important to stop. We can be so busy and one of the blessings, of course, of having Sunday is an opportunity to stop from running around. Some of us, I'm sure, that can be a busy day too. To stop and think about what Christ has done for us.
- [2 : 1 5] And immediately, within our hearts, the Spirit will begin to stir us, I'm sure, to think, Oh, Lord, what amazing grace. What amazing love. What an amazing God you are. And our first hymn is a hymn in that very same vein, 501. Oh, how the grace of God amazes me. I think one of the saddest things that can ever happen to a Christian is we lose the wonder of God's grace and being a Christian becomes something ordinary and mundane. When that happens, when we need to be very much afraid. But let's trust that the Lord will continue to make his grace amazing to us. So 501, let's stand as we sing. Let's continue that theme of singing and rejoicing in God in prayer.
- [3 : 1 6] Let's, a few of us, bring our prayers before God and our thanksgiving. Let's call out to him and worship him. Lord, we thank you again for the Lord Jesus and for all that he has done for us. We again gladly acknowledge that we stand open-mouthed, gobsmacked at the wonder of your love to us. And as we gather this evening, our longing and prayer is that we may glorify and praise you more, both now and every day.

Amen. 1 Peter and chapter 1. Their last week was our Suffering Church Sunday and last week our Suffering Church Week.

And last Sunday evening we looked at almost an overview really of 1 Peter, particularly picking up the theme that Peter is writing to suffering Christians, persecuted Christians.

It's important to make that distinction. And we saw how Peter talks about suffering, revealing that it is part of God's will for us, his people, and indeed the encouragements and helps that we have as well.

[4 : 37] So I felt it was appropriate since we'd done an overview of Peter and it would be good for us to do a series through 1 Peter. So we're going to do that, God willing, over the next few weeks, months, hopefully not years, but you never know with things like Christmas and Easter and other things coming and other things happening.

So it's going to be one of those series that we will dip into and out of again as we have done before. I'm hoping that next Sunday morning we will be back in Exodus, where we left off in Exodus chapter 12 earlier this year, and back into that for a few weeks again before we make our way up to Christmas.

So I'm going to read those first 12 verses once more of 1 Peter. 1 Peter chapter 1, first 12 verses, but we'll be thinking particularly this evening about verses 1 and 2.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who've been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by 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, 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.

[6 : 29] In 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 your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you've 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 goal 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, 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 Christ 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.

Even angels long to look into these things. So if you'd like to have 1 Peter chapter 1 open in a Bible, and particularly verses 1 and 2, which we'll be thinking of this evening.

[8 : 11] When you meet somebody for the first time, one of the ways you may introduce yourself is by way of your relationship with somebody who is known to both of you. So if I was to meet a friend of Angie's, I would say, my name is Peter, I'm Angie's husband.

Or if I was to introduce myself to one of John's teachers at school, I would say, I'm John's dad. And so on. Again, when we speak about somebody in conversation, we may, again, speak about them in relation to their job.

So we'll say, this is Paul, he's a doctor. Or in relation to perhaps an experience that they've had. You know, John, he's the one whose house was burgled last year.

That sort of thing. As Peter introduces us, in one sense, to the readers of this letter, to those he sent it to, he introduces them in their relationship to the world.

They are strangers in the world. And in relationship to their experience, scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, and so on.

[9 : 25] And those places are spread vast and wide over Asia being that part of modern-day Turkey and around about there.

Some of those names may sound familiar to you if you read the book of Acts lately, in the day of Pentecost, when people from those, Jews from those places were there. And it may well be that they were the ones who took the gospel back and founded those churches.

But it's especially their relationship to the living God that Paul is concerned about. And he talks about those who have been chosen, and so forth.

And immediately, particularly in verse 2, we have, again, the declaration that God is three persons in one Godhead.

The Trinity is the shorthand way in which we seek to explain, or at least to describe. Try unity. Three in one.

[10 : 32] And the truth, of course, that God is three persons in one is central to the Christian faith and to Christian truth. One of the distinguishing marks which sets apart all other cults, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, Mormons, every other false type of church, is that it will not recognize the Trinity.

It will explain it in some other way. Today, we'll talk about the person of Jesus Christ as being a God, but not the God, and so on. And the Trinity is a core, fundamental truth of the gospel.

Without it, everything within the gospel falls apart. And our salvation, ultimately, has no power. But that is how God has revealed himself again and again in the Scriptures.

We find, of course, in the New Testament, Jesus, as he bids his disciples farewell at the end of Matthew, chapter 28, we have that very clear teaching.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 54] And this morning, as we brought our service to a close, we quoted together or said together the words of blessing at the very end of 2 Corinthians and chapter 13, where we are told this, May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Now, Peter, like each of those New Testament writers, is very careful how he orders orders the persons of the Trinity. And he orders them in relation to the believers in the church.

Most of us, of course, when we think about the Trinity, we would immediately speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Partly because, of course, that's the order that Jesus gives them in those instructions in Matthew 28.

But there is a sense as well, isn't there, that with our limited understanding of the Trinity and with our naivety, we often can think of, even as Christians, as there being an order in the Godhead.

That God the Father is number one, he is the superior. That Jesus Christ, the Son, is next in line and that the Holy Spirit comes up in bronze place.

[13 : 18] But that is not correct. There is no sense of that in the Scriptures. We have no authority to think of God in that way. It's unfortunate, but it's again how our minds work.

We are limited and we cannot conceive of, therefore we find it hard to understand and to believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are each one equal in nature, authority, power, and importance.

And so we find that when, as we read there from 2 Corinthians 13, the order is given, the Son first, and then God the Father, and then the Holy Spirit.

And here we have the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. And so we see that in the New Testament there is no specific order given.

Each one is different. But I believe that the reason that Peter orders the persons of the Trinity in their relationship with the believers, with the church, is because he is working chronologically.

[14 : 29] In other words, in order of time and process. So we have the God, the Father, who chooses us, the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who sprinkles us by his blood.

So let's look at these together and think about them together and see what we learn about the persons of the Trinity in our salvation.

And again, there's a wonderful encouragement, isn't it? As we thought many times, it is God the Father, Son, and Spirit who are always working together for God's people.

We have the three persons of the Trinity in creation, and that comes out very clearly in Colossians, but also in Genesis chapter 1, and in redemption. We have not just been saved by the Father, or just been saved by the Lord Jesus, or just been saved by the Spirit, or a combination of the two.

It is the Father and the Son, the Spirit, together at work in your salvation and mine. As solid and as certain as it can possibly be. founded on the Trinity.

[15 : 39] So first in order, this is how I'm viewing things, chronologically. Those who've been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Now foreknowledge is that part of God's omniscience.

God knows absolutely everything, sees everything, but his foreknowledge is that part of his knowing everything whereby he knows the end from the beginning. He knows the future, the present, and the past all at the same time.

We're dealing with deep things, aren't we? Things that we find very hard to comprehend. Here's what God said through Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 46. I am God and there is no other.

I am God and there's none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come.

So, it's God who looks down, if you can imagine in one sense that this table is the beginning of creation to the end of time, God looks and sees the whole thing, sees the whole map, the whole line of history.

[16 : 52] And so, that's why he knows the end from the beginning and makes known what is yet to come even before it's happened. That's why he's God, isn't he? We can't do that nor can we comprehend that but that is why he is God.

And the wonderful thing is that the Bible teaches us that because that is the case, God knew all about you and me before we were born. David, the psalmist in Psalm 139 finds this quite amazing.

He says in verse 16, all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. God knew everything about you and everything about me before we were born.

Isn't that wonderful? He knew us and he knew all about us. and when Peter writes here, God chose us according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in one sense we have this realization that God seeing all of humanity, all the people who would ever live in the world, seeing everyone, he chose to save out of that great number a vast number only known to himself.

Seeing everybody he chose for himself a multitude. We know it's a multitude because we have that wonderful picture in Revelation where we're told there are people in heaven more than can be numbered worshipping and praising God.

[18 : 26] Here's how Paul describes it to the Ephesians. For he, that's God, chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight, in love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will.

That's the great mystery to us. And the important thing that we need to grasp from this is that God did not choose us because of anything good that he saw in us.

There has been some misunderstanding about this amongst Christians that they think well God chose us according to foreknowledge means that God looked into the future he saw the people who would respond to the gospel he saw the people whose hearts were tender and open to trust in him and so he chose them in that way.

But that makes a nonsense of God's choosing. God did not choose because he saw something good in us he chose us in spite of seeing everything about us and knowing what sinners we are and would be.

His choice is based solely on his electing love not upon whether we should do or would do right or wrong. This is how Romans in chapter 9 explains it in relation to Jacob and Esau.

[19 : 58] Romans 9 verse 11 and 12 speaking about Jacob and Esau before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad in order that God's purpose in election might stand not by works but by him who calls she was told that's their mother Rebecca the older will serve the younger.

So it's a great mystery isn't it? And yet surely such an incredible truth that God chose to save us before we were born and before we done good or bad and not because of anything in us makes us want to cry out like the hymn writer why oh Lord such love to me?

This is true grace that saves us not on the condition of what we will do in the future to earn our salvation but is dependent only upon the love of God.

So our first relationship to God is this that he chose us for himself. And then the next thing that Peter uses to describe the believers us included is that they are those through the sanctifying work of the Spirit through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Choosing is one thing but how does someone become a recipient of God's grace and peace? We'll come to that at the end of verse 2 but we have that sense of grace and peace be yours in abundance.

[21 : 38] How do we receive that grace and peace? God's chosen that we should have it and that we should be the recipients of it but how does it come to us? How do we become partakers of it?

Share us in it. The table may be wonderfully laid but how do you eat? Well the word sanctify means to set apart as holy to separate for God's use alone and so when we read in the Old Testament about the tabernacle that was built by Moses and the temple later by Solomon and all the articles the cups and the saucers and the spoons and the altar and all those things we read about them as being set apart for God as being holy sanctified.

They were just for God's use. You didn't use the cups and the saucers to have your tea as one of the terrible things that those who invaded Jerusalem did. They took away the items of silver and gold and they used them as things to eat with in feasts to their own gods.

That provoked the Lord to anger and you can read a bit about that in Daniel if you want to. The Holy Spirit's work is to separate us from the world, from that great company of people that God has chosen us from, to separate us out in one sense as maybe a sheepdog may separate out sheep from the flock, and to bring us into the people of God.

To separate us out and to bring us into the people of God. Paul, when he writes the Colossians, uses it in the terminology of being in one dominion and into another dominion. He says this in Colossians 1.13, For he, God, has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

[23 : 28] There's a transformation or transfer that takes place out of one into another. And notice that Peter tells us that this is by the work of the Spirit, meaning of course the Holy Spirit, the person of the Godhead.

He is the agent. He is the one who does the work. It's not us who sort of move ourselves like those refugees who are moving themselves from a war-torn Syria and other places across Europe to a place of safety.

It's not that we sort of pack up our bags mentally, if I can put it that way, and seek and take ourselves on the journey to God, but we're told it is the Spirit.

Elsewhere, to Thessalonians, Paul writes, in chapter 2, from the beginning, God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

What does that mean? What does the Holy Spirit do that sanctifies us, that sets us apart, that brings us into God's people and relationship with himself?

[24 : 36] We're just four very brief things, and there's many more, we can put them like this. The Holy Spirit accomplishes his sanctifying work, first of all, by making us alive.

We're spiritually dead, the Bible says, and the Holy Spirit makes us spiritually alive. Jesus himself promised that truth in John chapter 6. The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing.

He's arguing the importance and necessity of a spiritual rebirth that must take place in our lives. Nothing that we can do of the flesh, nothing we can do of ourselves. The Spirit gives life, that's essential.

How can we receive and enjoy God's blessing if we are dead towards him? Secondly, the Holy Spirit convicts us of the truth of the gospel we hear.

Here's 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. Our gospel came to you, not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, with deep conviction.

[25 : 43] That's the difference. We can tell people to a blue in the face about the Lord Jesus, we can tell them about the wonder of God's love, we can tell them about their need to flee from hell and God's judgment, but it will have no effect upon them, as we see ourselves, sadly, unless God's Holy Spirit works.

It comes with power and deep conviction. Conviction means to be convicted about something, to know something is absolutely true in the deep recesses of our hearts.

Then the Holy Spirit, and I'm putting these things, I'm saying then, but really they all happen together at one time, and we cannot put a nice neat bunch and say, well this happens and that happens and that happens.

God's Holy Spirit works in a wonderful way, and there's an immediacy about his work, but he opens our hearts that we might accept and believe personally the gospel for ourselves.

That's what happened to Lydia in Acts chapter 16, the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. She was convicted that it was true and her heart embraced it and took it to be truth for herself, and finally in this section here, the Holy Spirit gives repentance to us so that we can turn from our sin.

[27 : 06] Acts chapter 11, when Cornelius and the others received the Holy Spirit and they heard the gospel, when those who were looking by, standing by, said this, God has granted, given, even the Gentiles repentance unto life, and of course with repentance comes faith as well.

Ephesians 2 verse 8, it is by grace you've been saved through faith, this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. And so this is the sanctifying work of the Spirit, all inward isn't it?

He makes us alive spiritually to the things of God, they begin to interest us, and we begin to have a concern about things of God, then we begin to be convinced that this gospel of Jesus Christ is true, there's something about it that rings true, that we'd never seen before, and we begin to be opening our hearts, we want to receive, we want to know this for ourselves, and then we have repentance and faith that follows.

That's the work of the Spirit, it's all the Holy Spirit's work, it's nothing we can do for ourselves, we can't sort of stir it up, we can't make it happen by our own desires and efforts.

The Holy Spirit working in us because God chose us and not because of anything in ourselves deserving it. So we've seen that as Christians, the Christians to whom Peter is writing, he's telling them, encouraging them with this truth, you've been chosen by God, according to his foreknowledge, and by the Spirit of the Holy Spirit, you've been sanctified and set apart to belong to him, but there is a goal to this, why has God chosen, why is the Spirit sanctified, what is the end goal, or the goal in view, what is it that we are to happen to us?

[29 : 01] Well, ultimately, two things we see here, for obedience to Jesus Christ, obedience to Jesus Christ, obedience must, of course, include faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord.

God. We saw that faith is the gift of God, isn't it? Ephesians chapter 2. So we recognize by faith who Jesus is, that he's the Son of God, but more than that, he's the appointed King over all people.

Holy Spirit alone can do that. That's why when we, again, we talk to people and we share with them about Jesus and we say he's marvelous, fantastic, he's the Son of God, it's sometimes like water of a duck's back.

Because unless the Holy Spirit convinces us of who Jesus is, then we cannot accept him as Lord. But here's what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

People may mouth the words, but they cannot believe it in their hearts. Jesus is Lord. We own him as our personal King. King. We humbly yield to his authority over our lives.

[30 : 22] We declare that Jesus is the one who now sits enthroned in our hearts and he is the one we long to please and to follow and to keep his commandments. People try to make a distinction between obedience and love.

And they say, well, I love Jesus and I'm so grateful he died for me and I'm so thankful for all he did for me, but I can't really yield him. I can't really have him as my Lord.

There's still parts of my life, I still want to do what I want to do. I want Jesus, but I want to do what I want to do. The Bible says that's very, very dangerous and in fact is contradictory to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus made it totally clear to his disciples that no one can say they love him but does not keep his commandments. John 14, if you love me you will obey what I command.

One of the signs, one of the proofs as it were of the person who is changed by the Holy Spirit is not only that they love the Lord Jesus. Love of course can just be said but the proof of love is obedience.

- [31 : 35] We don't love in word only, do we? We love with actions as well and so it must be in our relation to Jesus sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ.
- Then we read and sprinkling by his blood. Sprinkling by his blood. Sprinkling of blood over a person or persons in the Old Testament had two very remarkable purposes.
- It was pictured two things. First of all it confirmed that those people were in a covenant relationship with God. It happens in Exodus 24.
- We may come to it in some future point when we get back to Exodus. Here's what happened. Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said this is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you.
- It was a symbol of the fact that God was one with his people and they were one with him. Sprinkling with the blood. It was a sign of ownership in that sense.
- [32 : 50] We were at the communion table this morning didn't we? Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus. Very much reminiscent of the words of Moses. This is the blood of the new covenant.
- covenant. The cup of the new covenant in my blood. And so when we are sprinkled by the blood of Jesus it is the assurance that we are brought into covenant relationship with God.
- Hebrews 12 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood. The very verse we were thinking about this morning about Jesus' blood being better than Abel's blood.
- It doesn't happen to us physically. We do not physically get sprinkled with blood. That would be rather gory I should imagine. But it is again like we've seen before spiritual work just as we've been sanctified by the Spirit and we are brought to obedience within our hearts to the Lord Jesus so this sprinkling is a picture to us an illustration to us of what God has done.
- We're brought into every blessing. Every blessing that it is for those who are his people. We're his chosen possession.
- [34 : 09] We are one with him. But the second instance in which blood sprinkled people and things was to picture cleansing from sin.
- Hebrews is very much full of this truth. Here's Hebrews 9 verse 13 and 14. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of heifers sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.
- How much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God cleanse our consciences from acts that leads to death.
- death. So just as the priest would sprinkle blood over the offerer of that sacrifice as a symbol that God had forgiven them and cleansed them from their sin, so he says the blood of Jesus has been sprinkled over us so that we are clean.
- in one sense he said ceremonially outwardly the person was declared clean but Jesus does it spiritually inwardly and he says later in the next chapter let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience having our bodies washed with pure water.
- [35 : 35] That's why many Christian denominations will baptize children or adults with sprinkling because of this picture and of this verse as well rather than perhaps immersing or pouring the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin.
- It's the spiritual inward work which is the wonderful thing. This sprinkling by Christ's blood is something that assures us that our sins are forgiven and that we are right with God.

So it's no wonder Peter concludes his greetings with these words grace and peace be yours in abundance. They are ours in abundance for every Christian who God the Father has chosen whom God the Holy Spirit has set apart whom every person that Jesus has sprinkled with his blood and to whom they give willing and glad obedience.

Peter doesn't have grace and peace to give them. It's not in his possession. It's not that as the apostle he's able to supply or provide the blessing. He's confident of it because he knows that it comes from God, Father, Son and Spirit.

And so as we've seen grace and peace are ours abundantly, overflowing because of these things. And we can echo really the words of Job within the belly of the fish as he was able to say salvation belongs to the Lord.

[37 : 15] God's doing. We are his by his work and by his grace. Let's sing our final hymn this evening, the right and only response to the assurance we have of what God has done for us.

My heart is filled with thankfulness. It's going to come up on the screen. For him who bore my pain. Let's stand as we sing.

Let's say together the words of the grace.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen. Amen.