

1 Peter 1:1-12

The first letter of Peter touches on a number of themes including suffering and persecution. The word “suffering” and its derivatives occurs twenty-one times in 1 Peter. Peter stated his reason for writing, namely, to encourage his readers, who were facing persecution for their faith, to stand firm (5:12). Peter’s intent was to give them a divine perspective on undeserved suffering which was happening at the hand of that mad emperor, Nero. The letter also has much to say about everyday Christian life and duties.

Peter is writing to several groups of Christians, probably both Jew and Gentile, living in the northern regions of Asia Minor. How does he describe them (vv. 1-2)? God’s elect...strangers in the world....scattered....chosen.

When you think of strangers (v. 1), what do you think of? Strangers (Greek: *Parepidemoi*) are persons temporarily residing within a land and among a people to whom they do not belong. Peter is reminding them that they are citizens of both earth and heaven.

Application: **Do I actually think of myself as a “stranger in the world?” That I really don’t belong here?**

What were they chosen for (v. 2)? For “*obedience to Jesus Christ.*” There has to be an earthly, real life component to having been chosen. We are not merely chosen for salvation, heaven, eternity, etc. Additionally, Peter is telling us that salvation is the work of God. It is a work in which we are involved. It is a work in which we participate. But in the final analysis, salvation is God’s work. We were also chosen for “*sprinkling by His blood*” which refers to the benefits of His redemption as applied to His people, i.e. the salvation, heaven, eternity piece of the picture.

Peter is telling his readers that in eternity past, God chose them to belong to himself. The doctrine of divine election is not always popular, but it does have this virtue – it allows God to be God. Attempts to make it palatable to man only succeed in detracting from the sovereignty of God. Any difficulty in reconciling God’s election and man’s responsibility (free will) lies in man’s mind not in God’s. The Bible teaches both doctrines and we should believe both. The truth lies in both extremes, not somewhere between them.¹

Application: **What might be some characteristics of Christians who are living an “obedience to Jesus Christ” lifestyle? Try to think in terms of what they do as well as what they don’t do.**

According to Peter, what has God done for us (v. 3)? He has given us new birth. It is given to us as a gift. It is not something we deserve, that we can work for or that we can earn.

We have been “born again” according to v. 23. The phrase describes the great change that takes place at conversion, i.e. spiritual regeneration. Peter’s idea is that when a person is saved, he is made a new creation as Paul described in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

We are given new birth into what two things (vv. 3-4)?

1. Into a living hope – **What is our living hope?** Our new life in Christ.

What is our living hope based upon? The resurrection of Jesus Christ - which is the foundation of Christianity. The resurrection is one thing that differentiates Christianity from all the other religions of the world.

2. Into an inheritance -- **What does that look like?** Peter doesn’t really describe our inheritance. All he can tell us is what it is *not*. An “inheritance” which will not perish, which will not decay, and which will not fade away. Our inheritance is Jesus Christ Himself, heaven and the blessings that He has promised us (Ephesians 1:3).

Why is the promise of our inheritance certain (v. 5)? Because we are kept, shielded and protected by the power of God until the end, ensuring that we will endure through faith until death or the coming of Jesus. Not only is God protecting our inheritance, but He is also protecting *us* by His power. Peter was not saying our faith keeps us saved. He said God’s power keeps us saved.²

- 1 Corinthians 1:8 *He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- 2 Corinthians 1:21-24 *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

What does Peter mean by “the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (v. 5)?” The aspect of salvation that we have yet to enjoy, namely, our glorification. When God glorifies us, He will save us from the presence of sin forever. This will happen when we see our Savior and are from then on with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This glorification will become ours at death or the Rapture, whichever event comes first.³ Salvation can be viewed in a progressive fashion -- Initially, when we trust Christ as Lord and Savior, we are saved from the penalty of sin (justification). As we grow and mature in Christ, we are increasingly being saved from the power of sin (sanctification). When we die, we will be saved from the presence of sin (glorification).

Peter has given his readers good news so far....they are God's elect, chosen, given new birth, inheritance, shielded by God's power.....all this should have encouraged them and given them great joy. **Now, how does Peter temper the good news (v. 6)?** By telling them they will have to suffer all kinds of trials.

What was the purpose of these trials (v. 7)? To test their faith and prove that it is genuine, ultimately bringing glory to God. God doesn't allow suffering to come to us without being very much aware of it and having a definite purpose for it. God is keenly aware of every tear we shed in sorrow. There is an Arab proverb which reads, "All sunshine makes a desert." God knows that it takes the rains of suffering to bring forth the fruit of righteousness.

When prevailing conditions are favorable, it might be easy to be a Christian. But when public confession of Christ brings persecution and suffering, then the casual followers drift away and are lost in the crowd. A religion which costs nothing is worth nothing. Faith which refuses to pay the price is not genuine.⁴

Trials tend to rob us of our joy if we do not remember the truths Peter urged his readers to bear in mind here.

Gold was the most valuable thing known to man. Why is your faith of greater worth than gold (v. 7)? Faith has eternal value. Gold perishes. Gold is one of the most durable of all materials; yet it too will one day perish but our faith will not.

There is a present benefit to suffering as well as a future benefit. What is the present benefit (v. 8)? We are promised increased intimacy with Christ when suffering occurs. These Christians had a vital and dynamic love affair with the Lord Jesus Christ which sustained them through the trials.

What did the prophets not understand about “this salvation” (vv. 10-11)? The Old Testament prophets had predicted that Messiah would experience both suffering and glory, e.g., Isaiah 53. However, they did not understand the bigger picture of how His suffering and glory would fit together. They saw the two mountain peaks – (a) Calvary where Jesus suffered, and (b) Olivet, where He will return in glory. But they did not see the valley which lay between, that is, the present Age of Grace.⁵

Christ is held up to us (v. 11) as the perfect example of why suffering comes, “...the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow.” Our suffering is ultimately designed to glorify God.

What is the message to us (v. 12)? Because of our place on God's timetable, we have a more clear and concise view of salvation than two other spiritually elite groups---the prophets and angels. What a privilege!

¹ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), pp. 2250

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Peter, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>)

³ Ibid

⁴ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), pp. 2252

⁵ Ibid p. 2253