

1 PETER: A LIVING HOPE

1 Peter 1:1-12

June 7, 2020

*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.
 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, that your faith –
 of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire
 – may bring praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Peter 1:3-7

1 PETER

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

- GOD'S PEOPLE ARE A MISUNDERSTOOD MINORITY, LIVING UNDER THE RULE OF A DIFFERENT KING.
- PERSECUTION OFFERS A CHANCE TO SHOW OTHERS THE GENEROUS LOVE OF JESUS.

1:1-2 GREETING

HELLO, GOD'S PEOPLE WHO ARE CHOSEN & EXILED...
 OLD TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS OF ABRAHAM & ISRAEL

1:13-2:10 A NEW FAMILY IDENTITY

OLD TESTAMENT IMAGES OF GENTILE CHRISTIANS
 "GOD TOOK LAKE" SEE EXODUS 12-11
 THE NEW EXODUS & PASSOVER SEE EXODUS 12-15
 THE HOLY PEOPLE IN THE WILDERNESS SEE LEVITICUS 11-11
 THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE ISAIAH 40, JEREMIAH 31
 THE NEW TEMPLE ISAIAH 28:16, PSALM 118:22
 A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS EXODUS 19:1-6

2:11-4:11 SUFFERING AS A WITNESS TO JESUS

THE PROBLEM: HOUSEHOLDS EXPECTED TO WORSHIP THE Pagan GODS
 THE RESPONSE: CHRISTIANS ARE LIBERATED TO LOVE THEIR ENEMIES
 THEIR FUTURE VINDICATION
 A SACRED SYMBOL SHOWING THEY ARE JOINED TO JESUS
 PERSECUTED • MURDERED VINDICATED • EXALTED

1:3-12 SONG OF PRAISE

"PRAISE GOD WHO CAUSED US TO BE BORN AGAIN INTO A LIVING HOPE."
 NEW HOPE NEW IDENTITY NEW FAMILY
 SUFFERING IS A PURIFYING FIRE THAT CAN DEEPEN OUR FAITH (1:7)

4:12-5:9 SUFFERING & FUTURE HOPE

REJOICE WHEN PEOPLE PERSECUTE YOU BECAUSE OF ME. SEE MATTHEW 5:10
 LEADERS TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH
 "RESIST EVIL WITH FIRM FAITHFULNESS."
 THE REAL ENEMY: SPIRITUAL EVIL

5:10-14 CLOSING

MAY GOD STRENGTHEN YOU!
 GREETINGS FROM THE CHURCH IN BABYLON & ROME
 ARCHITECTURE FOR CORRUPT RULERS (SEE JEREMIAH 50-51)
 GOD'S PEOPLE ARE "EXILED" FROM THEIR TRUE HOME

created by the Bible Project

Pastor Fakkema's Coloring Challenge: I'll have a reward for any 1 Peter coloring pages I receive this week!

From Peter to me

Peter, an ambassador of Jesus Christ, to those who have settled down alongside the native pagan population, scattered as seed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, chosen-out ones, this choice having been determined by the foreordination of God the Father, those chosen out to be recipients of the setting-apart work of the Holy Spirit, resulting in obedience (of faith) and (thus) in the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace (be) to you, and peace be multiplied.

1 Peter 1:1-2 (Kenneth Wuest's literal translation, Doug's Trinitarian arrangement)

Peter is a _____

The letters recipients are _____

“stranger” (NIV) and “exile” (ESV) mean: _____
(see Wuest's translation above)

we are “scattered” because we are _____

Peter's greeting is Trinitarian:



The living hope for “resident aliens”

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has [caused us to be born again] 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.

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, that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may bring 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 goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV, with the ESV change to “caused us to be born again” in 1:3)

1) the guarantee of new birth that is _____ and not _____

2) the promise of _____ in trial, revealed in Jesus Christ

3) the joy of faith coming to _____

Concerning this salvation

Because you kept on believing, you’ll get what you’re looking forward to: total salvation.

The prophets who told us this was coming asked a lot of questions about this gift of life God was preparing. The Messiah’s Spirit let them in on some of it – that the Messiah would experience suffering, followed by glory.

They clamored to know who and when. All they were told was that they were serving you, you who by orders from heaven have now heard for yourselves – through the Holy Spirit -- the Message of those prophecies fulfilled. Do you realize how fortunate you are?

Angels would have given anything to be in on this!

1 Peter 1:10-12 (The Message, thus “the Message” for “preach the gospel”)

1) Listen to the Spirit’s testimony of Jesus in _____

2) _____ the Spirit’s power in the _____

A new perspective on suffering and rejoicing

In this you rejoice,

though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

so that the tested genuineness of your faith

more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire

may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him you love him.

Though you do not now see him, you believe in him

and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your soul.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV translation, Doug's arrangement to emphasize "rejoice"!)

The three "thoughts" of rejoicing:

1) Though _____ is best proved by trials

2) Though I came to know Jesus apart from _____

3) Though as I face uncertainty and trial I depend _____

Even so, I rejoice because _____

The trial that grieves me:

My response of rejoicing:

Resources for further studies of 1 Peter

I found Kenneth Wuest's "First Peter in the Greek New Testament" very helpful (Eerdmans, 1942).

Bob Deffinbaugh's sermons on 1 Peter at <https://bible.org/series/glory-suffering-studies-1-peter>

Spurgeon's series of messages on 1 Peter at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/by-scripture/1-peter>

ThirdMill has a collection of sermons on 1 Peter at <https://thirdmill.org/sermons/series.asp/srs/1%20Peter>

John Piper has a wonderful series of sermons at desiringgod.org but the best might be "God's Great Mercy and Our New Birth" at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/gods-great-mercy-and-our-new-birth>. He borrows from John Bunyan's "Last Sermon" on John 3:13 at https://biblehub.com/library/bunyan/the_works_of_john_bunyan_volumes_1-3/mr_bunyan_s_last_sermon_.htm

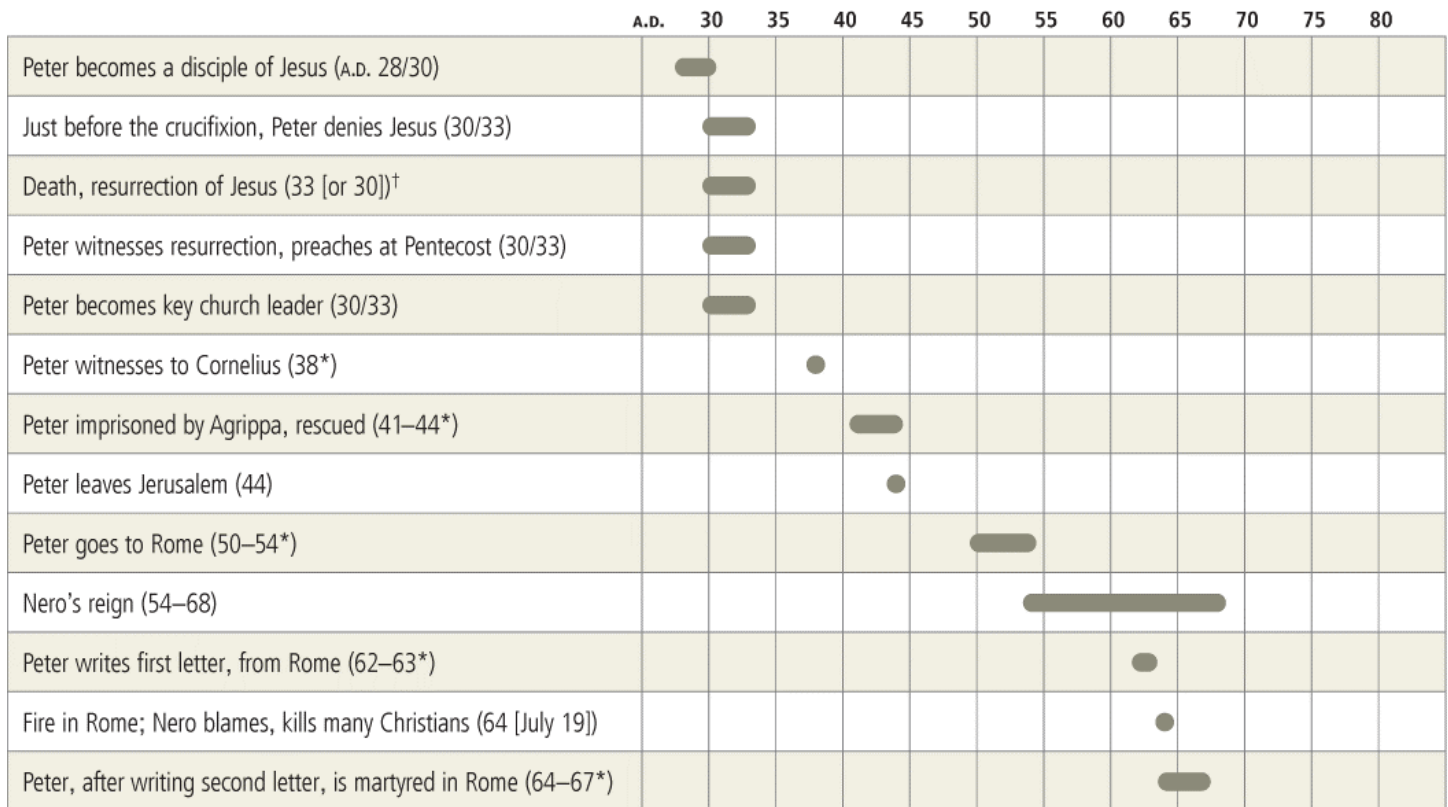
Reformation21's "resident aliens" blog on suffering at <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/suffering-and-redemption>

Ligon Duncan, and other First Presbyterian, Jackson, preachers has a wonderful series of messages at <https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/scripture/1-peter>

Karen H. Jobes' commentary of 1 Peter in the Baker Exegetical Commentary series (Baker Academic, 2005).

The Gospel Coalition produced this animated introduction (on which this week's coloring page is based) and study taken from the ESVSB at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/1-peter-introduction/#overview>

The Gospel Coalition offers a introductory lecture series on 1 Peter at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/study-1-peter/#course-introduction>



1 PETER

HOPE
IN THE
MIDST OF
SUFFERING

• GOD'S PEOPLE ARE A MISUNDERSTOOD MINORITY,
LIVING UNDER THE RULE OF A DIFFERENT KING.
• PERSECUTION OFFERS A CHANCE TO SHOW OTHERS
THE GENEROUS LOVE OF JESUS.

SIMON PETER
(ARABIC; KENNAH) GREEK
- KEY LEADER IN THE EARLY
FIRST DISCIPLES
JERUSALEM CHURCH (ACTS 1:1-10)

YOU ARE A ROCK!
(MATTHEW 16:18-19)

TO REBUILT THE CHURCH I WILL BUILD ON YOU
(MATTHEW 16:18)

ROME
BIRTH TO SPAIN
SALVANS (ACTS 27)

ASIA
MINOR
DINTEARS (ACTS 19:1-2)

HOSTILITY & HARASSMENT
(1:13-17)

1:1-2 GREETING

HELLO, GOD'S PEOPLE AND ARE
CHOSEN & EXILED
(1:1) (1:1-2) (1:1-2)
OLD TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS
OF ABRAHAM & ISRAEL
(GENESIS 12-50)

AND I AM
SUFFERING LIKE YOU
ARE

GENTILES WHO WOULD BELONG TO THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM...
(1:1-2)

1:3-12 SONG OF PRAISE

PLEASE GOD AND CAUSED US TO BE
BORN AGAIN INTO A LIVING HOPE. (1:3)

NEW HOPE
NEW IDENTITY
NEW FAMILY

SUFFERING IS A
PURIFYING FIRE
THAT CAN DEFEAT
OUR SIN. (1:7)

1:13-2:10 A NEW FAMILY IDENTITY

OLD TESTAMENT IMAGES APPLIED TO GENTILE CHRISTIANS
(1:13) (1:13) (1:13)

1:13-17 THE NEW EXILE & PASSOVER
SEE EXODUS 12:1-13

1:18-21 THE NEW PEOPLE IN THE LAND
SEE LEVITICUS 11:1-17

1:19-21 THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE
SEE JEREMIAH 31

2:1-10 THE NEW TEMPLE
ISAIAH 20:1-6; TRAIL 108-122

2:17-18 A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS
EXODUS 19:4-6

2:11-4:11 SUFFERING AS A WITNESS TO JESUS

2:11-17 SUFFERING TO
KOPAN RULE!
(2:11-17)

2:18 CHRISTIAN SLAVES,
WIVES & HUSBANDS
(2:18)

3:1-6 THE PROBLEM:
HOUSHOLDS OF SUFFERING TO
KOPAN THE EMPEROR'S SONS
(3:1-6)

3:7-13 THE RESPONSE:
CHRISTIANS ARE UBERGED
TO LOVE THEIR EMPEROR?
(3:7-13)

3:14-17 THINK FUTURE
VINDICATION
(3:14-17)

3:18-20 PERSECUTED & MURDERED
(3:18-20)

3:21-22 A SACRED SYMBOL
SHOWING THEY ARE
JOINED TO JESUS
(3:21-22)

3:23-24 VINDICATED & EXALTED
(3:23-24)

4:12-5:9 SUFFERING & FUTURE HOPE

4:12-14 REMOVE WHEN
PEOPLE PERSECUTE
YOU BECAUSE OF ME.
MATTHEW 5:10-12

4:17-19 LEADERS TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH
(4:17-19)

5:1-9 THE REAL HERO?
SPIRITUAL
FAITHFULNESS.
(5:1-9)

5:10-14 RESIST EVIL
WITH FIRM
FAITHFULNESS.
(5:10-14)

5:10-14 CLOSING

MAY GOD
STRENGTHEN
YOU!
(5:10)

GREETINGS
FROM THE
CITY OF
BABYLON
(5:13)

AND THE
CITY OF
ROME
(5:13)

• GOD'S PEOPLE ARE TRULY
JOINED TO JESUS
FROM HEAVEN THROUGH
HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH
(5:10-14)

created by the Bible Project

Suffering: Victim or Victor? (1 Peter 1:1-6a)

Bob Deffinbaugh at <https://bible.org/series/glory-suffering-studies-1-peter>

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice ...

Introduction

Years ago, radio Bible teacher and preacher Dr. J. Vernon McGee spoke at a Dallas Theological Seminary chapel service while I was a student. Dr. McGee told us he had been diagnosed with a very serious form of lung cancer with a very low cure rate. Having often visited those about to undergo surgery, Dr. McGee confessed that his being rolled into surgery felt quite a lot different than his accompanying someone to surgery. God granted Dr. McGee a most unusual cure, prolonging his ministry a number of years.

Our perspective changes considerably when we become the participant rather than the observer. To some degree, circumstances do shape our perspective. But our perspective has everything to do with the way we respond to our circumstances. In recent years, our culture has taken a very unhealthy turn, embracing a perspective which predisposes our collapse under life's adverse circumstances rather than causing us to persevere through them. The essence of this new perspective may be summed up in the word "victim." No longer are we responsible for our attitudes and actions when we have been wronged or abused—we are now "victims." Whatever happened is no longer our fault nor are we responsible for the way we choose to respond.

The Scriptures make it very clear that Christians will be the recipients of unjust treatment because of our faith in Jesus Christ and the godly lives we are to live in a sinful world. While the Bible promises that we will experience innocent suffering for the cause of Christ, it nowhere speaks of our being "victims" in the contemporary sense of the word. Rather, the Bible forthrightly speaks of us as "victors."

Peter introduces the subject of innocent suffering for Christ's sake in verse 6 of chapter 1. But he will not mention the trials and testing of our faith until he has first set down the essential truths which should shape our perspective on suffering. These truths are set down by Peter in verses 1-5 of chapter 1.

Our study begins by determining the recipients of Peter's epistle as indicated in verse 1. We will then explore the source of our salvation in verse 2. Verses 3-4 focus on our future hope of which we are assured, due to the salvation God accomplished through the person and work of Jesus Christ. From verse 5, we will be reassured of our security in Christ and the certainty of experiencing those things awaiting us at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Close attention to our text will help us learn from Peter why we who trust in Christ can never be considered victims; we are victors.

The Recipients of Peter's First Epistle (1:1)

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

One could quickly conclude Peter wrote this epistle to Jewish believers who had been scattered abroad. James' introductory greeting in his book is similar to Peter's introduction: *James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings* ([James 1:1](#)).

Peter, after all, was the “apostle to the Jews,” while Paul was the “apostle to the Gentiles:”

But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter with the gospel to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles) ([Galatians 2:7-8](#)).

Other verses in 1 Peter also strongly indicate a broader readership than only Jewish believers. These statements seem difficult to apply directly to Jewish believers: *14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy”* (1:14-16).

10 for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God (2:10).

3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead (4:3-5).

While Peter’s words are addressed to individual saints, they also give instruction concerning the conduct of members of the church. Specifically, Peter provides instructions to the elders and younger men in the church (5:1-7). We find in the Scriptures no such thing as a “Jewish” or a “Gentile” church. The church of Jesus Christ is one body, made up of Jews and Gentiles, without any distinction or dividing wall between them (see [Ephesians 2:11-22](#)).

Peter writes not to one church or even to the saints in a small geographical area. He writes to those saints in five Roman provinces. While specific cities are unnamed, Peter’s epistle would surely include the churches in the “seven cities of Asia” to whom the Book of Revelation is written (see [Revelation 1:11](#), chapters 2 and 3). These churches were neither Jewish nor Gentile. A clear Jewish presence and influence did exist in all the churches, just as there was a Gentile presence (the Gentile proselytes or “God-fearers”) in the synagogues.

Peter writes then to the saints scattered throughout the Roman world, clearly reflecting the change in Peter concerning Jews and Gentiles. This change was dramatically brought home to him in the events of [Acts 10](#) and 11. Later, they are reinforced by Paul in [Galatians 2:11-21](#) after Peter fell back into his old ways under pressure from Jewish saints. Clearly his epistle is written not just to Jewish saints or Gentile saints, but to all saints who make up the one church of Jesus Christ.

Peter writes in obedience to the command given him by the Lord Jesus: “... *when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers*” ([Luke 22:32](#)).

Just as Peter stumbled when faced with suffering for Christ’s sake at the time of His arrest and trial and then was strengthened, so he now writes to those facing suffering who need to be strengthened. He can offer strength and comfort from his own experiences. Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians well express Peter’s ministry:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. 6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; 7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort ([2 Corinthians 1:3-7](#)).

The Source of Our Salvation (1:1c-2)

*... who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,
by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood:
May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.*

Those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity have difficulty with this and a number of other texts, for they clearly speak of three members of the Godhead, all of whom are involved in the work of salvation. The Holy Spirit is strategically placed between God the Father and God the Son. Each member of the Trinity plays a distinct role in the salvation of the saint.

The Father chooses those who will be saved. We find Peter's words consistent with the teaching of Paul: 3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him* ([Ephesians 1:3-4](#)).

Christians differ not so much on whether God chose us, but over the basis of that choice. Some fail to understand the significance of the word "foreknow," supposing it means only to know (about) in advance. The word does have this meaning, as seen in [Acts 26:5](#) and [2 Peter 3:17](#). But when Peter uses the word "foreknowledge" here, he speaks of God's choice of us apart from anything we would or could do, based solely on His sovereign grace (see [Romans 9:10-18](#)). In [1 Peter 1:20](#), Peter speaks of Christ, Who was "foreknown before the foundation of the world." Peter is not saying God knew about Jesus, but rather that God chose our Lord to die on the cross of Calvary before the foundation of the world, before Adam and Eve were created, before the first sin was committed. Peter made a similar statement in his sermon at Pentecost:

"This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" ([Acts 2:23](#)).

To "know" can mean to "know about," but it can also mean to choose. God "knew" Abraham; that is, He chose Him: *"For I have chosen [literally, "known" him (Abraham)], in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about Him"* ([Genesis 18:19](#)).

To "foreknow" is to choose ahead of time. Thus, Paul uses "foreknow" to speak of God's sovereign choice in eternity past ([Romans 8:29; 11:2](#)).³

The Father chose those whom He would save in eternity past, and it is the Holy Spirit who "sanctifies" the elect, drawing them to faith in Christ:

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth ([2 Thessalonians 2:13](#)).

When Nicodemus sought out the Lord Jesus, the Savior told him he must be "born again," and that this was the unseen work of the Holy Spirit ([John 3:1-8](#)). Before our Lord's crucifixion, He told the disciples it was necessary (and better) for Him to depart and for the Holy Spirit to come, for it was the Spirit who would convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment ([John 16:7-11](#)). The Holy Spirit sets the saints apart to God by drawing them to faith in Christ:

And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#); see also [Titus 3:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:5](#)).

While the Holy Spirit is also involved in our sanctification, the emphasis here is on the role of the Spirit in bringing men to Christ. If the sanctification of the believer were in view, this ministry of the Holy Spirit would more logically have been introduced after, rather than before, the saving work of Christ.

Peter then moves from the choice of the Father and the sanctifying of the Holy Spirit to the contribution of Christ's shed blood, by which we are cleansed and forgiven. Peter's wording indicates the Holy Spirit's sanctification has particular effects. The Spirit's work brings about obedience which results in being sprinkled with Christ's blood.

The sprinkling of blood is definitely an Old Testament image referred to by the author of Hebrews:

18 Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. 19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." 21 And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. 22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. 23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. 26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him ([Hebrews 9:18-28](#)).

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them ([Hebrews 11:28](#)).

And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel ([Hebrews 12:24](#)).

If I understand Peter's words correctly, he is describing our salvation as the work of the Trinity, spelled out sequentially in the order actually achieved in time. The Father chose us in eternity past for salvation. The Holy Spirit drew us to faith in Christ, regenerating us, illuminating our minds so as to make the gospel clear, convicting us of sin, and baptizing us into the body of Christ. The result of the Spirit's ministry is obedience to the gospel call, trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, and thus being cleansed by His shed blood. The obedience in view here is not so much the obedience which follows salvation as an evidence that we have a living faith, but the obedience of faith (see [Romans 1:5](#)) which results in salvation.

When Jesus was asked what men must do, He gave a very simple answer:

"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal." 28 They said therefore to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" ([John 6:27-29](#)).

Simply put, 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. Whatever role we play, we do so because He has quickened and enabled us. As Paul writes,

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen ([Romans 11:36](#)).

The Hope of our Salvation (1:3-4)

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

Peter's words in verse 3 indicate that he is writing more here than simple instruction to give comfort and assurance in times of suffering; he is also indicating the basis for praise toward God. "Blessed be" in the New American Standard Bible is rendered "Praise be" in the New International Version. One cannot help but recall the words of Job when he was told of the catastrophe which had struck him, especially the death of his children:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. blessed be the name of the LORD" ([Job 1:21](#)).

Peter first praises God for the cause and the motivation for our salvation. God Himself is the cause of our salvation. He "caused us to be born again" (verse 3). This He did out of "His great mercy." It is not our worthiness nor our desirability, but His mercy which is the reason for our salvation. Mercy is not an ego-inflating word, for it conveys that the object of mercy is pitiable, while the one showing mercy is praiseworthy.

Secondly, Peter further praises God because of what we have been saved to. God has caused us to be "born again." We have been born again "to a living hope." Our hope is a living hope because Christ not only died for our sins but rose from the grave so that we too are assured of rising with Him. Christ's resurrection is the assurance that we have a future, and that future is our hope. As Christians, this should be our desire and our expectation.

Christ's death and resurrection accomplished an inheritance for which every saint waits. Christ's resurrection from the dead assures us God was well-pleased with Christ's atoning work. Since His resurrection is the basis for, and assurance of, our own resurrection, we know we will enter into God's eternal blessings. All Old Testament saints died without entering into the promised blessings, but they were assured they would experience them after their death:

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth ([Hebrews 11:13](#)).

All Old Testament saints, like Abraham, had a resurrection faith which enabled them to hope for blessings after death:

He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him [Isaac] back as a type ([Hebrews 11:19](#), see also verses 20-22).

Through Christ's death and resurrection, we have a future inheritance. This inheritance will be ours because Christ died. But it will be ours after we have died (unless, of course, we are alive at the second coming of Christ). Because our hope of future blessings rests in the finished work of our Lord, it is a certain hope. Peter gives a three-fold description of this hope: it is imperishable, it is undefiled, and it will not fade away. William MacDonald says it is death-proof, sin-proof, and time-proof.⁴

Our inheritance will not deteriorate over time. Perishable fruit tucked away in the back of our refrigerator may be forgotten until a pungent odor brings it to our attention. But our inheritance is unlike perishable food. Neither is our inheritance subject to defilement. Someone may try to reserve a piece of cake by defiling it so no one else wants it. But even sin and impurity can never defile our future inheritance.

Thirdly, our inheritance will not “fade away.” Time will not diminish its existence, like things that wear out, nor cause its desirability to diminish. With anything new, time causes its glory to fade. But our inheritance, unlike the glow on Moses’ face in [2 Corinthians 3:7-11](#), never fades.

What an assurance! The blessings which constitute our future hope are absolutely certain for they do not diminish over time. They are also being kept for us. We need not worry about any contingency which might nullify our hope. Our blessings are sure.

The Security of our Salvation (1:5)

... who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

What could possibly keep us from enjoying the blessings of our future hope? It could not be the loss or devaluation of these blessings, for they are imperishable, undefiled, and they will not fade away. It is possible that our blessings will not fail, but we will. If verses 3 and 4 assure us that the blessings of our salvation are secure, verse 5 assures us that we are secure. Our blessings are reserved for us in heaven, and we are preserved for them on earth.

We are protected by the power of God. God is our refuge and strength. He is our strong tower. His power protects us. Because He is all-powerful, nothing can cause us to lose that which God has provided, promised, and preserved. As Paul has written,

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, “For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ([Romans 8:35-39](#)).

We are protected by the power of God. We are also protected through faith. The power of God is provided for our protection, but God provides and requires faith as the means through which God’s power is appropriated. While Peter was going to fail, as Jesus warned, the Savior had prayed for him that his faith would not fail. Peter could fail and fall, but he could not fall completely. Like us, he was protected by the power of God for a salvation yet to be revealed.

Conclusion

Peter’s introductory words we have considered in this lesson serve as a message from God to us. We may sum up the essence of his introduction with these observations.

(1) We may praise God and rejoice because our salvation is secure. The first words of verse 3 are words of praise: “Blessed be ... ” Our praise and rejoicing is directed toward God. The words of this epistle, and of these verses, should be the basis and motivation for our worship and our rejoicing in the Lord.

(2) Our salvation is secure because, from start to finish, it is the work of a sovereign God, a work of mercy and grace, and not of human merit. When Jesus warned Peter of his upcoming denial, he adamantly protested. He assured the Lord that though all others might deny Him, he would not. Peter trusted in himself when he assured the Lord Jesus he would not fail Him. We know the extent of Peter’s failure. But out of his failure, Peter came to understand that it was not his faithfulness, but God’s, that assured him of entering into the blessings of the kingdom of God.

Peter's words in our text underscore the basis for our security. Our salvation is the work of God, and not the work of men. God's salvation involves the work of the Trinity. The Father chose us in eternity past. The Spirit set us apart to salvation by causing us to trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. And the shed blood of Jesus is God's means for cleansing us from the guilt of our sins. He is the "author and finisher" of our faith ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). God's salvation is not based upon our merit and good works, but it was motivated by His mercy, directed toward us in our pitiable estate.

(3) Our salvation is from sin and to a future inheritance in heaven that is certain. The salvation of which Peter speaks encompasses both time and eternity. God chose us before the creation of the world (1:2; see [Ephesians 1:4](#)). We now experience some of the benefits of our salvation. The full benefits and blessings await us at the second coming of Christ and will last for all eternity. Peter especially focuses our attention on the future dimensions of our salvation which are a "living hope" (1:3), upon which we must completely fix our hearts and minds (1:13).

The hope of our full, future salvation is based upon the work of God (1:2), and it rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. Particularly in view is the resurrection of Christ, which not only provides God's seal of approval on His work, but assures us that we shall rise from the dead, and that the blessings which lie before us are "imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away" (1:4).

Many of the benefits and blessings of our salvation are yet to be experienced in the future. It is important to note that Peter very clearly states we have not obtained all of the benefits and blessings accomplished through the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. Many of the blessings of our salvation are still a matter of hope and not a present experience. These blessings are "ready to be revealed at the last time" (verse 5). Some Christians believe all of the blessings are ours to experience now, and our failure to enjoy them is due to our lack of faith in claiming them. This is not what Peter teaches. He tells us they are future, and while they are certain, we must wait until the coming of our Lord to enjoy them.

This future dimension of our salvation is not something we are naturally inclined to believe or welcome. Partly, this is because the present is to have its share of suffering (1:6ff.). Those who did not believe in Jesus challenged Him to "come down now" ([Matthew 27:42-43](#)) to prove He was the Messiah. Even to the end of His presence on earth, our Lord's disciples were eager for His kingdom to come immediately (see [Acts 1:6](#)).

(4) Our salvation is secure, for we are kept by the power of God. Not only is our inheritance certain, "reserved in heaven for us" (1:4), but we are being kept securely for it. Our future inheritance will not fail us, and we shall not fail to enter into it and its blessings. We are "protected by the power of God through faith" (1:5). Our eyes can be fixed upon our future hope because our enjoyment of its blessings is absolutely certain.

(5) Salvation is the vantage point from which we must view suffering. One cannot mistake the unity of verses 3-12. The emphasis of verses 3-5 is upon the certainty of our salvation and our security in Christ. The emphasis of verses 6-12 is upon suffering, the suffering we can expect to experience as a result of being saved. It is no accident that Paul speaks first of our salvation, of its certainty and our security, and then of our suffering. Salvation is the vantage point from which our sufferings are to be viewed. To be certain of the future hope of the believer is to be equipped to endure the present sufferings to which we have been called.

How unfortunate that many Christians look at their salvation from their circumstances, rather than looking at their circumstances through their salvation. When some saints suffer, they begin to doubt their salvation and the certainty of their future hope. Other Christians may even encourage such doubts. Some may blame suffering on sin, as Job's friends counseled him. It was not his sin, but his righteousness which was the occasion for his sin. It was not his downfall, but his growth which God had in view. Neither Job's friends nor his wife were of any real comfort to him, for they did not point him God-ward, as does Peter. Peter wants us to view our suffering from the standpoint of our security as saints, based upon God's mercy, grace and power.

(6) Peter teaches us that saints are not “victims” but “victors” in their suffering. The “victim” mindset has become a dominant note in our society. We look to our past, and to the abuse of others, or to the “genes” passed on to us from our parents as the cause of our sin and suffering. Peter turns our eyes toward God and toward the shed blood of His Son, in whom we have not only forgiveness of sins, but victory in Christ. We were not saved merely to cope with life; we were called to be conquerors in Christ. We are overcomers, especially in the trials and tribulations of life. Let us believe and behave accordingly.

The mindset Peter calls for from every saint is demonstrated by his fellow-apostle, Paul. Paul expresses the security of the saint in the midst of suffering, based upon his confidence in the Savior:

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day ([2 Timothy 1:12](#)).

May we be able to say “Amen” to these words because we have trusted in Jesus Christ as our Savior, and also because we view our suffering from the standpoint of the salvation God has provided, and now protects and preserves, in His Son, Jesus Christ.

3 In [Romans 11:2](#), it is almost impossible to understand the term “foreknew” in any other way than “to choose ahead of time.” In effect, to “foreknow” is to “elect” (or select) someone. God has not rejected Israel, Paul argues, because God chose them long before time began. What God starts, God finishes (see [Philippians 1:6](#)). He is the “author and perfecter of faith” ([Hebrews 12:2](#)).

4 William Mac Donald, *I Peter: Faith Tested, Future Triumphant*, p. 16, as cited by D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), p. 61.

God's Great Mercy and Our New Birth

John Piper at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/gods-great-mercy-and-our-new-birth>

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

The goal of this sermon is set for me and for you in the first phrase of verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter's response to God's causing his people to be born again, and raising his Son Jesus from the dead, and giving us a living hope, and providing us an imperishable inheritance in heaven is to bless God. "Blessed be God!" And if that is his response, it should be our response.

What he is going to talk about makes him exult and bless God. He did not have to tell us that. He did not have to begin by letting his emotions for God show. He could have begun in a cool, collected, dispassionate, unemotional way. He could have said: "My lecture topic today is regeneration. I have several related doctrines upon which I wish to discourse. Let me list them: (1) God; (2) regeneration; (3) hope; (4) the resurrection of Jesus; (5) inheritance; (6) heaven. Let us give close attention to these things." He could have begun that way. But he didn't.

And what that says to me, as a preacher, as I look at this text is: "Don't you begin that way either. Don't handle these truths like that." Peter begins with exultation and blessing and wonder because that's what these realities have produced in his heart. When he considers these things, he does not say coolly, "There, I have taught the truth clearly. My job is done. Do with it what you will." He says, "Blessed be God!" He does it here. He does it in 4:11: "To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." He does it again in 5:11: "To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Peter breaks out again and again in praise and blessing. He writes about the greatest realities in the universe with a worshipful spirit. He writes with exultation and wonder and awe and marvel and heartfelt gratitude.

Preaching as Worshipful Exposition

So when I consider what it is to preach on these realities here's what I come up with: Preaching is worshipful exposition. Preaching is worshipful exposition of glorious biblical reality. If you have the notion that what we do in this Sunday morning service is half worship and half preaching, you're wrong. It is half worshipful singing and half worshipful preaching (with some other elements stirred in that I pray are also worshipful). We can fail. We can sing without worshiping. And I can preach without worshiping. That's professionalism and formalism. And it's not our goal. Our goal is to worship from beginning to end.

Worship is when the mind apprehends great truth about God, and the heart kicks in with deep feelings of brokenness or wonder and gladness and admiration and gratitude, and the mouth says something like, "Blessed be God! Blessed and praised and honored and glorified be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So the first phrase of verse 3 sets our goal this morning. Our goal is to worship God; to see God's great reality with our minds, and feel God's beauty and wonder with our hearts, and speak and sing God's greatness with our mouths. That's what Peter did when he wrote about new birth. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's what we should do. There's the goal.

Five Realities That Lead Us into Worship

Now what truth, what great reality brought Peter to this exultation? If we limit our answer just to verses 3 and 4 there are five great realities about God that gripped Peter's mind and heart.

1. God's Great Mercy

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy. . . .

There's the first one: God's great mercy. If you wonder if there is mercy with God, the answer is that there is great mercy. "According to his *great* mercy." Peter is moved by that.

2. God's Work of New Birth

Who according to his great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope. . . .

There's the second reality about God that moves Peter: God is the one who caused us to be born again. New birth is God's work. His mercy, not our work, produces a new being called a child of God and an exile and alien in the world.

3. God's Work of Raising Jesus from the Dead

He caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. . . .

There's the third reality about God that gripped Peter: God raised Jesus from the dead. Verse 21 makes it more explicit: "God raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God." The resurrection is about God. God did it. So we trust God. We hope in God. And Peter says, "Blessed be God!"

4. God's Promise of an Inheritance

To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away. . . .

There's the fourth reality about God that gripped Peter: God promises an inheritance to his newborns. God is the begetting Father and God is the source of the inheritance. Fathers leave an inheritance to their children, not vice versa. God is the giver here. All the way through this passage he is the fountain. God is the one overflowing. We are receivers at every point: mercy, new birth, resurrection, inheritance.

4. God's Work of Keeping Our Inheritance

[The inheritance is] reserved [literally: "kept"] in heaven for you.

Who is keeping it? Answer: God is.

So if you just take verses 3 and 4 there are five answers to the question: *What great reality brought Peter to worship this way? What gripped his mind and moved his heart and opened his mouth to say, "Blessed be God"?* The answer is:

1. God is great in mercy.
2. God causes us to be born again to a living hope.
3. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.
4. God promises an inheritance to those whom he fathers.

5. God is keeping that inheritance so that it will never ever perish or soil or fade.

God Causes New Birth

Now what is the main thing that God is doing here? The main thing is that God has caused new birth. His great mercy is the source of it. His raising Jesus from the dead is the historical triumph over death that makes it possible. Our living hope in a great inheritance flows from it. But the main work of God focused on here is the new birth. So let's focus on that: God caused us to be born again.

One of the reasons we don't exult in this like Peter is that we don't understand it, or we don't believe it. "God caused us to be born again." God fathered us into second being as children of God. We had no existence as his children. "That which is born of the flesh is [just] flesh," Jesus said in [John 3:6](#). But "that which is born [again] of the Spirit is spirit." We had no living spiritual existence. We were what a human father and mother and common grace could make of us. But then God came on us and caused us to be born again. He awakened a new life — the life of faith and hope in God, the life of the Spirit in us.

But most of us have been taught one way or the other that God did not do the decisive work here, we did. And it is no wonder, then, that we do not respond like Peter: "Blessed be God, blessed be God who by *his great mercy* did it!"

How Do You Know You Were Born Physically?

Let me get at this with a provocative question: If I asked you, "How do you know that you were born from your mother's womb?" what would you answer? You would answer, "I'm alive! I exist outside my mother's womb. I'm here." And that's right. And that is all the answer needed.

You would not answer, "I know I was born because I've got a birth certificate at home." Or, "I know I was born because I did some historical research at a hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and found a document with a little footprint on it that matches the curly lines on the bottom of my foot." Or, "I collected signed affidavits of three or four witnesses that saw my mother pregnant and soon after saw me in her arms."

You would simply say, "I know I was born because I am alive."

How Do You Know You Were Born Spiritually?

But now suppose I asked an average evangelical churchgoer today, "How do you know you were born again?" How many would answer, "Because I am alive to God. I have a living hope. I have a living faith. I once had no spiritual life and now I am alive spiritually, with spiritual appetites and spiritual enjoyments. Once I was dead and now I am alive in God. I know him, I love him, I trust him. I hope in him. I follow him. The proof that I was born again is my life today!"

How many, rather, would answer, "I know I was born again because I did what you must do to be born again: I asked Jesus into my heart; I prayed to receive Christ; I walked down an aisle and accepted Jesus; I have a card here in my wallet that I signed on June 6, 1952, where I pledged that Jesus is my Lord."

Why Would There Be Differing Answers?

Why would there be such a difference in answering how we know if we were physically born and how we know if we are spiritually born?

One reason is that we know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we had nothing to do with our physical birth. It was done to us. We did not cause it. We did not choose it. It happened to us and all we can do is be thankful for it or resent it. So it doesn't even occur to us to prove we were born by appealing to things that we did to get born. There aren't any. We didn't cause it. It caused us.

But when it comes to our spiritual birth — or second birth — millions of Christians don't believe that. We don't believe that our second birth was done to us and that we did not choose it or cause it. We have been taught in hundreds of ways that we ourselves bring about our new birth. That we choose it and we cause it.

So when we are asked, "How do you know it happened?" we tend to answer, "Because I did the things I was taught you must do to be born again." We don't say, with reality and authenticity, "Because I am alive to God." We infer our new birth from the things we did to cause it not from the things that it causes in us.

It is not surprising, then, that a kind of Christianity grows up around that self-understanding — that self-made Christian existence — which does not explode with praise over our new birth and say with Peter: "Blessed be God, blessed and praised and thanked and loved be God — and God alone — *who by his great mercy* caused us to be born again."

The New Testament Picture of Our New Birth

God did it. And God will get the glory for it. This is the uniform New Testament picture of what happened to us.

- I was dead in trespasses and sins and God, in the great love with which he loved me, made me alive together with Christ ([Ephesians 2:5](#)). I did not raise myself from the dead. God raised me.
- I was spiritually non-existent. I was a *no-thing*. Not even created. But then God created a new person, and I became a new creation in Christ ([Ephesians 4:24](#); [Galatians 6:15](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). I did not create myself. God created me.
- I was blind to spiritual things. Flesh and blood could not help me. But the Father in heaven mercifully and sovereignly opened my eyes to see that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God ([Matthew 16:17](#); [11:27](#); [Acts 16:14](#)). God caused me to see and acknowledge his truth.
- I was in utter spiritual darkness like the darkness over the deep before God made light. And then "God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' shone in my heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" ([2 Corinthians 4:6](#)).

"God caused us to be born again. And God will get the glory for it"

- My mother and my father and pastor Gene Lawrence planted the word of God and watered it, but it was God and God alone who did the miracle of giving life and making it grow ([1 Corinthians 3:6](#)).
- I was self-willed, rebellious, proud, going my own way and would never in a hundred years have come to Jesus on my own, and God drew me: "No one can come to me [Jesus said] unless the Father who sent me draws him" ([John 6:44](#)).
- I had no repentance in my heart, no sorrow for my sin or passion to change, but God graciously granted me repentance and lead me to a knowledge of the truth ([2 Timothy 2:25](#)).
- I had no faith, no desire to look like a weakling and depend on another. But God, in his great mercy, granted me to believe ([Philippians 1:29](#)) and saved me by faith. But this was not my own doing it was the gift of God ([Ephesians 2:8](#)). I believed. It was my choice to believe. But my choice was the gift of God; the effect and not the cause of new birth. I was born, as [John 1:13](#) says, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And Peter says, "God, in his great mercy, caused us to be born again."

God did it, lest we should ever boast and fail to bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and proclaim the excellencies of the one who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light ([1 Peter 2:9](#); [1 Corinthians 1:24](#); [2 Timothy 1:9](#)).

Bless God with All Your Heart

So let us bless God this morning with all our hearts that he has caused us to be born into his family and given us living hope. Some of you are being drawn and wakened by the Spirit of God this morning. Do not resist.

Verse 23 says that we are “born again through the living and abiding word of God.” May God make my words live with life-awakening power in your lives. Come, believe, and bless the Lord with us for this great saving work of new birth.

Mark Johnston

“Suffering and Redemption”, June 4, 2020 at <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/suffering-and-redemption>

It would be tempting to think that yet another article on suffering at this time is nothing more than jumping on the bandwagon of the current situation; but that is not altogether the case. Yes, we are facing a crisis of global proportions that is full of uncertainty; but it is neither the first, nor (to date) the worst of its kind. What it does represent, however, is yet another of those many examples in world history of God’s using a megaphone (to borrow C.S. Lewis’ imagery) to get our attention.

As was noted in a social media post not that long ago, the three great axioms that have defined humanity in our 21st Century world – ‘fear of death, desire for control, and love of money’ – have all been turned against us: ‘Our Dagon’s have fallen!’

Like it or not, this global pandemic has simply reminded us of our frailty, our mortality and our foolishness as a race. But also, for the Christian church, we are reminded of the way in which we too – at least in those parts of the world that have been Westernised – have been subtly sucked into the lie of the ages. Our quest for what Francis Schaeffer described as ‘personal peace and affluence’ has been exploded – at least temporarily.

Many things could be said about suffering as a feature of life in a fallen world – many of them probably directed towards those of our fellow-human beings who are still in a fallen condition. But it is fascinating to see how much Scripture focuses on suffering in a way that is intended to educate the elect and deepen our experience of salvation in Christ. Christopher Ash, in his excellent commentary on Job in Crossway’s *Preaching the Word* series, describes this as ‘undeserved and redemptive suffering’ manifest in the life of this man of God in patriarchal times.

Such language at the very least sounds provocative; but could equally be construed as bordering on the heretical – were it not for the fact that the Bible repeatedly homes in on God’s sovereign use of suffering in the lives of his saints as an integral part of their salvation.

We instinctively balk at the idea of suffering in the experience of any person as somehow having redemptive value. And, yes, it is absolutely right to respond in this way. There is a once-for-allness about the sufferings of Christ, in terms of who he was and all he did, that uniquely underpins our salvation in its totality. It is forensic, we contribute nothing to what he accomplished and it is unassailable. However, the Bible’s references to suffering and salvation are not limited to Christ and his finished work on Calvary.

Paul is able to tell the Colossians, ‘Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church’ ([Col 1.24](#)). The apostle wasn’t for a moment suggesting there was something deficient in the sufferings the Saviour had to endure to secure salvation. Rather, he most likely had in mind the sufferings of the people of God are called to endure by virtue of their union with Christ ([Ro 8.17](#)). And, as Paul indicates in this verse, it is only as we are united with him in his sufferings, will we share with him in his glory. Indeed, the very wording of Jesus’ call to discipleship could not be clearer: ‘If anyone would follow after me...let him take up his cross...’ ([Mk 8.34](#)). In the words of John Piper, ‘it is an invitation to die.’ The Christian life in its very essence is a life of suffering – living out the life of heaven in a fallen world which is antagonistic to all the things of heaven. In that sense our suffering as believers is ‘redemptive’ not as the means by which we are saved, but as the means by which God works out through our life and experience what he has worked in us through our union with his Saviour-Son.

Peter and the author of Hebrews tease this thought out further in their references to suffering being like fire that burns off dross and refines precious metal ([1Pe 1.6-7](#)) and to life’s hardships as ‘discipline’ ([He 12.7](#)) designed to build us up towards maturity and usefulness in the faith. Again, these are redemptive in the sense that they

are instrumental in aligning our life and experience more fully to what we actually are in our new life in Christ. They are a means towards our growth in grace and in maturity.

There is, however, at least one other reference to suffering that falls into the category of seeing its having a redemptive function – only this time as a means to bringing others to faith and repentance. We find it on the lips of Paul as he anticipates his own impending death.

Speaking to Timothy, he says, ‘I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory’ ([2Ti 2.10](#)). What does he mean by this? As he reflects on the countless sufferings he has endured as part of his apostolic calling and as he prepares himself for the martyrdom he must face, he bears this burden joyfully as a testimony to those who are elect, but not yet saved. As the root of the word ‘martyr’ indicates, he will bear witness not only through the words he proclaims, but through the pains he endures in his service of the gospel.

The bottom line in this – for all Christ’s followers in every manifestation of suffering we are called to endure – is that the way we suffer will speak for itself to the watching world. More than this, in ways that will almost certainly surprise us, the difficulties we endure and the way we endure them will be a means in God’s hand to bringing his chosen ones to faith and repentance.

When I was pastoring a church in London, we had a Chinese lady in our congregation who had come to faith in Communist China. When she told the story of her conversion, she said that it was through observing a neighbour in her apartment block who was a Christian. Every day he was tormented and ridiculed for his faith by all around him. But, as this lady watched the way he suffered for his faith, she was persuaded that the Christ who he unflinchingly professed must be worth believing in. His suffering had a redemptive purpose woven through it: the means of bringing others to faith in Christ.

1. Foreigners (1:1a)

Most modern interpreters understand the address to Peter's readers as "foreigners" to be a metaphor that describes the Christian's relationship to the world. By virtue of faith in Christ, home is heaven, and Christians therefore are just passing through this world as foreigners (see "Recipients" in the introduction). The term *parepidēmos* (plural, *parepidēmoi*) was used in the first century to designate someone who did not hold citizenship in the place where he resided and was therefore viewed as a foreigner. The lack of citizenship implied that such people did not enjoy all the rights and privileges of citizens. Moreover, as foreigners, they were not necessarily expected to hold the values and practice the customs of their host culture. Because of such differences, foreigners were often looked upon suspiciously as potentially subversive to the established social order, an attitude not unfamiliar even today.

J. H. Elliott (1981) argues that this term should be understood as describing the actual sociopolitical situation of the people to whom Peter was writing before their conversion to Christ, a conversion that only further marginalized them from the dominant society. Although Elliott's argument has been unconvincing to most interpreters, it has called attention to the issue of the social and historical setting of the addressees and the occasion that prompted the letter to be written (Achtmeier 1984; Chin 1991; Clowney 1988: 228; Dalton 1983; Danker 1983; Hemer 1985; Porter 1993. McKnight 1996: 48–51 stands alone in following Elliott).

This commentary presents the possibility that the people to whom Peter writes were Christians from Rome who were deported to Roman colonies in Asia Minor during one of the several expulsions in the first century (see "Roman Colonization and the Origin of 1 Peter" in the introduction). Peter, the apostle associated with Rome, uses their disorienting experience to instruct and encourage them with his insight that all Christians are in a real sense foreigners to their place of residence, regardless of where they are living, whenever Christian values and customs conflict with those of the dominant society.

Peter again describes his readers as *parepidēmoi* in 2:11: "Dear friends, I urge you, as resident aliens [*paroikoi*] and foreigners [*parepidēmoi*], to abstain from the carnal desires, which war against your soul." Other than these two occurrences in 1 Peter, the word *parepidēmoi* occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Heb. 11:13: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were strangers and foreigners [*parepidēmoi*] on earth." The word occurs only twice in the LXX. In Gen. 23:4 LXX Abraham describes himself as an alien (*paroikos*) and a foreigner (*parepidēmos*) while living among the Hittites. In Ps. 38:13 LXX (39:12 MT/Eng.), the psalmist likewise refers to himself as a foreigner (*parepidēmos*) as well as an alien (*paroikos*) with respect to the Lord. These two OT occurrences of *parepidēmos* do not seem to constitute a biblical metaphor that Peter is extending to his readers. (A different case may perhaps be made for *paroikos*, but that word does not appear in the opening address. See comments on 2:11.)

Rather than understanding *parepidēmos* in 1:1 as describing the believers' transitory life on this earth as a journey toward their heavenly home, it should be understood primarily as defining the relationship between the Christian and unbelieving society. Goppelt (1993: 67–68) explains:

The sociological effect of being a foreigner is in view: Christians distance themselves as nonconformists from handed-down life-styles (1:17f.); therefore, those around them are "estranged" regarding them (4:3f.). In both Christians and those around them the effects of this foreignness can or should be felt—the letter speaks of this in the parenthesis—but the foreignness is established by election.

These foreigners are not addressed as a single group. That is, in contrast to Paul, Peter notably does not address his readers as the ἐκκλησίαι (*ekklēsiai*, assemblies, churches) in the named provinces. Goppelt (1993: 64) sees this as

characterizing them in the horizontal dimension in light of their relationship to the world around them: They have been set apart from the nations of the world by election and live scattered among them as foreigners who have no homeland here. The very address thus envisages the theme of the letter: Christians in society. It does not have particular churches in mind, but Christians in the everyday world living among their fellow human beings.

Peter uses the term “foreigner” to distance his readers from the hold their society may have over them. Nevertheless, Peter does not call them to withdraw from society but will instead present Christian engagement with society in the mode that might be expected of foreigners who wish to maintain their identity of origin. That is, foreigners dwell respectfully in their host nation but participate in its culture only to the extent that its values and customs coincide with their own that they wish to preserve. In this way the salutation of the letter introduces a concept of a differentiated engagement with society that subsequently will be expanded in terms of neither full assimilation nor complete withdraw¹

THE EPISTLE OF 1 PETER

¹ Jobes, K. H. (2005). [*1 Peter*](#) (pp. 61–62). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

“Let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”
1 Peter 4:19

AUTHOR: This is the first of two letters that bear the name of the author, Peter the Apostle

† Peter was the son of Jonas (Mt. 16:17; Jn. 1:42), was originally named Simeon (Mk. 1:16, Jn. 1:40), and was a fisherman who lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum. His brother Andrew introduced him to Jesus (John 1:40).

† Peter was married and his wife may have accompanied him during his ministry (Mark 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 9:5).

† Jesus renamed him Peter / Cephas which means “rock” or “stone” (Jn 1:42; Mt. 16:18). Peter was the leader among the apostles and in the early church, including preaching on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

† According to tradition, Peter was forced to watch his wife be crucified, but encouraged her with the words, “Remember the Lord.” He too was crucified, but pled to be crucified upside down because he said that he was not worthy to die the death of his Lord. He was granted this final request and died in 67-68AD.

† Internal Evidence: the author was a “witness of the sufferings of Christ” (2:23, 5:1; Mt. 26:58-69) and was writing from “Babylon” (Rome) which is consistent with early church testimony of Peter’s ministry (5:13).

† External Evidence: 2 Peter claims to be the second letter written by Peter.¹ Aside from this, numerous other sources from the early church quote from 1 Peter and claim the Apostle was the author.²

† The phrase “by Silvanus” (5:12) refers to Silvanus being the one whom Peter personally commissioned to carry the letter, not that he was the secretary / amanuensis who actually penned the letter.

AUDIENCE: congregations of Jew and Gentile Christians who faced increasing social and physical persecution

† 1 Peter is a “general epistle” written not to one particular congregation (ie. Ephesians, Galatians, etc), but to a group of congregations scattered throughout Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).

† Since it had been over 30 years since Pentecost, the churches would have been multi-ethnic congregations.

† Gentiles are addressed (1:18, 2:10, 4:3-4) and it can safely be assumed that Jews lived among these cities since they were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Peter applies Jewish terms to these New Covenant churches.

DATE: a date of 62-64AD is most probable.

† Persecution the recipients were facing was very likely not an official persecution by the government throughout the entire Roman empire like the ones under Domitian (95AD) or Trajan (112AD).

† Peter died at the hands of Nero during the localized persecution of Christians in Rome (64-68AD). Some suggest that his unqualified positive comments about the government (2:13-17) require a date prior to 64AD.³

PURPOSE: To encourage believers to grow in their trust and obedience to God in the midst of their suffering.

† In the LORD’s kindness, this letter arrived before the heaviest waves of persecution as a way to ground them more deeply in the person of Christ and the unshakable hope of heaven.

¹ I take 2 Peter to be written by Peter, but even if not, it is a very early testimony of an even earlier letter by Peter.

² 1 Peter is quoted in *Epistle to the Philippians* by Polycarp (died, 155 AD), writings of Papias (died, 130AD), *Against Heresies* by Irenaeus (182-88AD), and in the historical accounts of Eusebius (325 AD).

³ I find this reasoning unpersuasive as Peter and Paul (Romans 13:1-7) speak without bias under the inspiration of the Spirit.

KEY TERMS / IDEAS: These terms are repeated in 1 Peter and are helpful to understanding the book.

1. “Jesus (x9) / Christ (x22)” is the Savior of sinners and also the example for God’s people to emulate by grace
2. “suffer” (x17) Christians are promised that persecution, trials, and temptations will line the way to heaven
3. “obey / obedience” (x7) worship is most basically keeping God’s commands, which is more difficult during trials
4. “evil” (x8) destructive immorality that is harmful to people and opposed to God’s character and rule
5. “grace” (x8) an unmerited gift of God by which He gives salvation and strength to fight against sin and struggles
6. “love” (x9) an affectionate delight for God and others produced in the heart of believers through regeneration
7. “living” (x12) in stark contrast to the perishing world, God gives new life to His people by uniting them with Jesus
8. “passions” (x4) sensual affections for sinful pleasures that characterizes those who do not know Jesus
9. “called” (x7) the act of God to draw sinners to Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit
10. “holy” (x9) distinctly set apart from all sin and evil; God is the holy one who makes His people like Himself
11. “judge” (x5) God is the final judge who executed justice at the cross and will judge the wicked on the last day
12. “heaven” (x3) Peter constantly calls the suffering saints to look toward their coming heavenly home
13. “hope” (x5) in the face of trial Christians do not despair because they know God has and will act for their good
14. “glory” (x11) weighty and beautiful radiance of God that His people will share when He returns for us
15. “Jesus’ Return” is the hope of God’s people and is highlighted throughout 1 Peter (1:5, 1:7, 1:13, 2:12, 4:7, 4:13, 5:1, 5:4)

AN OUTLINE OF 1 PETER

1:1-2:10 – Chosen for New Birth

1:1-12 – Joy in our Living Hope

1:1-2 – Elect Exiles

1:3-5 – Future Inheritance

1:6-9 – Present Joy

1:10-12 – Past Revelation

1:13-2:10 – Grace to Live in Holiness

1:13-16 – The Preparation for Holiness

1:17-21 – The Price of Holiness

1:22-2:3 – The Purification in Holiness

2:4-10 – The Priesthood of Holiness

2:11-3:22 – Called to New Behavior

2:11-3:7 – Glorifying God in Our Conduct

2:11-12 – Christian Conduct as Witnesses

2:13-17 – Christian Conduct as Citizens

2:18-25 – Christian Conduct as Slaves

3:1-7 – Christian Conduct as Spouses

3:8-22 – Suffering for Righteousness Sake

3:8-12 – Bless Others while Suffering

3:13-17 – Keep a Clear Conscience in Suffering

3:18-22 – Christ Suffered for Sins

4:1-5:14 – Kept for Coming Glory

4:1-19 – Endure Suffering with the End in View

4:1-6 – Suffer as Christ Suffered

4:7-11 – Serve as Stewards of Grace

4:12-19 – Share in Christ’s Sufferings

5:1-14 – Entrust Yourself to God’s Care

5:1-4 – Elders Shepherd as Examples

5:5-11 – Humbly Submit to God’s Care

5:12-14 – Stand Firm In God’s Grace