

1:1* ¶ 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, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the 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, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,7* so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;8* and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,9* obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

In our first message on Peter we realized that he was writing to encourage the church in view of a difficult time of persecution that was coming. In this we must always be identifying with the early church because persecution of the saints is occurring today and will continue to occur until Jesus come and puts all of His enemies beneath Him. Peter is echoing what he was taught by Jesus,

Mt 5:11* "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me and Joh 15:20* "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Peter is preparing the dispersed people of Christ to be ready. But he sounds like Jesus again when he tells them that even though they are aliens in the land, they are to live like good citizens. This to me is Jesus saying be salt and light in the world. Where ever true Christians living the world is a better place whether or not the world knows it or appreciates it.

But Peter also does what Jesus did when He was preparing the disciples for difficulties ahead. He encourages them with truths about God and God's sovereign love and divine purposes.

Peter reminds us that we are the chosen, the elect of God and we are so because purposed to love us like He loves no others and by grace has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ. His foreknowledge of us is his intimate knowledge of us that flows from His mercy toward us who have repented and believed by the grace of God.

Not only that, but having known us and then electing us by the freeness of His grace

He has a very specific purpose for us and that is to be obedient to Christ.

Obedience to Christ is the reason we are God's chosen. Heaven is a benefit that comes because we are chosen it is NOT the reason we are saved by grace.

Brethren how blessed we are to be found in Christ who is our New Covenant and to partake in all the blessings that God has for us in Him. Peter's audience understood these benefits and they knew the doctrines of grace and now Peter is using them to encourage them as persecution is increasing.

We have studied the Doctrines of Grace. How do you relate to them?

Are they just written words that spell out doctrine? Or are they reflective of the depth of God's grace and mercy to you and in meditating upon them you find great comfort because they are the true Gospel and they are meant to be truths that not only enlighten us but also encourage us about the purpose of a Sovereign God who has chosen a people for Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ?

Total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints are words of horror to some who call themselves Christians. But they were doctrines of comfort for Peter to teach and encourage these people with. And all of these doctrines are taught in this letter.

And so Peter reminds these that they are aliens, as we discussed in length last week.

Our text for today begins with the end of vs.2:

and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

The aliens who are the elect by the intimate love of God and set apart by God through the work of the holy Spirit for the purpose of obeying Christ have been sprinkled by His His blood.

Peter is using Old Covenant language here to teach New covenant truth.

Under the Old covenant law sprinkling was the ceremonial way the blood sacrifices were applied.

This was done with the sprinkling of the blood of the passover lamb. Ex 12:22,23 and to the sprinkling of the blood on the book of the covenant, and on the people at Mount Sinai, Ex 24:8 and to other sprinklings of blood in their legal sacrifices.

But now the application of the blood of Christ is efficaciously applied to the heart of the New Covenant believer by the Spirit of God, for cleansing, pardon, and justification. This affords true, solid, conscience peace and joy now, and entitles those who have been cleansed of their sin, eternal happiness and glory, all which are secured by electing grace.

The shedding of blood under the Old Covenant never forgave anyone's sins. It was a constant reminder that they were sinners. The sacrificial system with the mediation of the priesthood only gave Israel a stay of execution. One had to be saved by grace through repentance and belief in the promises of God. One had to be a spiritual son of Abraham.

The blood of the New Covenant is Jesus' blood:

Heb 9:13* For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, **Heb 9:14*** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? **Heb 9:20*** saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU."

Heb 9:21* And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.

Heb 9:22* And according to the Law, *one may* almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Because of these things he is able to say:

May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure

Both words here are actually in a plural form.

Mercy and grace are not separated for the elect of God. They do different things

Grace is specifically salvific. Mercy is available to all as God desires to be merciful

Mercy and grace are supplied to us so that we have a knowledge of the reason we are to be here and to know that we are pilgrims for the purpose of glorifying God.

We know we have experienced both once we are regenerated and converted.

Vs.2 : **May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.**

Peter is writing grace and peace be multiplied to you. Multiples of grace and peace be yours. And grace is the source of "peace."

Peter reflects on grace in a later passage,

1 Pet.4:10* As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Grace manifests itself in many ways

There is the grace that the grace saves us by election, that sanctifies us by the spirit, the grace that sustains and secures us in Christ for we are as Peter writes kept by the power of God

And there are several kinds of peace. There is outward peace and an inner peace.

There is the *eirene* of God the *Shalom* of God. There is the peace that surpasses all human comprehension. We have the peace that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

He wishes them all kinds of each; and there being several degrees and measures of both, he prays for an increase of these degrees in them, and so a multiplication of all good, both temporal and spiritual, to them as they continue as aliens and will face persecution.

We must treasure these truths and pray that we live in them and by them every day of our lives as obedient servants of Christ.

Then Peter does a wonderful thing in this letter.

He writes:

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

It is common for us to reflect on the word blessed as it relate to us in the direction of God toward us. God blessing us or we being the blessed of God as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. But how many of us use the word to bring us to worship and a greater consideration of God regarding the hope he has given us in Christ our Lord?

That is exactly what Peter is doing.

Here the word blessed comes from eulogetos (ev/low/yeh/toss-for those who are reading this). This is the word from which eulogy or to eulogize finds its origin of meaning. It means to speak highly of, to speak with great regard.

This is something we need to do more of, especially in our day.

The church has promulgated a very low view of God. So much of what is called worship is still nothing but a short cut to self-gratification and feeling good by the time one leaves church on Sunday morning. It is meant to rev up the engines of our emotions and move us to some experience whereby we validate our worship of God.

This is far from what Peter has in mind.

3* ¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

This praise, this eulogy, this worship is first rooted in the person of the Father not what He has provided for us. It first focuses on one of His attributes.

We have studied the attributes of God. We need to contemplate and worship God first for who He is and not for what He does because He only does what He does because of who He is.

All of our worship, all of our prayer and all of our desires must be rooted in God Himself. Now what truth, what great reality brought Peter to this worship? If we limit our answer just to verses 3 and 4 for now, there are five great realities about God that filled Peter's mind and heart.

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.

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.

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 moves 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!"

Verse 4: ...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.

Finally...

[the inheritance is] reserved (literally "kept") in heaven for you.

Who is keeping it? The 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 (And) God is keeping that inheritance so that it will never, ever perish or soil or fade.

We should never be at a loss for true worship of God.

The problem is that much of worship today is not based on meditation of God's word as its source as we contemplate His wonderful work and promises. It too often is an exercise in stirring up the emotions and trying to give validation for our experience as being meaningful because we felt something rather than God confirming for us what He wants us to know. That brings true emotion from me. Knowing that God wants me to

know something and that He instructs me by word and Spirit and that I can respond emotionally to what He is doing unto the praise of His glorious grace. True worship begins and ends with God, not me.

Doctrinal truth, when it is properly understood, should move us to tears and joy and serious mindedness. When we have grasped any nugget of truth that is contained in the riches of the treasure of Christ our Lord and Savior our gracious Covenant, we should be overwhelmed that God would consider us enough to do such a thing.

O how I love Jesus because HE first loved me.

And again remember why Peter is reflecting on these things which THEY ALREADY UNDERSTOOD. Persecution was on the way. Peter is not reluctant to review the truths of living for Christ at any time.

In his second letter he writes:

This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, (2 Peter 3:1-3, NAS95)

It is a good thing to remind ourselves of the basics of the faith. We should never tire of hearing those truths that are essential to our learning to love Christ more. And of course we do not do this to the exclusion of other biblical truth. All scripture is inspired by God and given to us for many good results that help us to be better children of the kingdom. And to walk in a manner that is worthy of our Lord.

Peter's call to worship is a wonderful one.

Can we ever not find enough reasons to bless the name of our God.

Are we ever at such a place in our lives as Christ's disciples that we forget that every aspect of our salvation is a gift from God and completed for us in Christ our Lord?

How do I worship God in the midst of trials and bad things looming on the horizon? Do I retreat from Gods and worship? Do I let the rules of the world become my guide for living? Do I back away from Christians because I know I am not living for Christ and exhibiting an incurable love for Jesus? How do I respond to the threat of things that are not so pleasant to face in this sinful world.

Peter tells us to bless God and reflect on all that He has done because of who He is.

And because of who He is we can have absolute faith in the Sovereign purposes of God and all that He has done for His glory and for His good pleasure.

Peter reminds us that our worship of God is based first on who God is.

As we have taught about prayer, the more we grasp of Christ the more biblical and Christ centered our prayers will be. The same holds true for how we bless God. The more we grasp of what God has done regarding our salvation the higher view of God we will have. We will recognize as Peter did that salvation is the work of God and no other. It is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit providing the entire work of salvation and its glorious outcome for our lives.

As we bless God with this mind set we will continue to know and grow in the knowledge and grace which is found in the riches of God's mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord.