

29th December 2024

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 December 2024

Preacher: John Tucker

[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Lovely to see you all here. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you for the tremendous gift that you have given to us in your scriptures.

! And we pray that as we look at them together, you would help us to understand them, take them into our lives and use them day by day, so that our lives may reflect and reflect.

And honour the Lord Jesus Christ, because we ask it in his name. Amen. I'm not going to do a detailed verse-by-verse exposition, you may be relieved to hear.

We're going to leap like mountain goats from peak to peak with the odd descent into the valleys of this chapter. This is, I think, an important epistle, just because it wasn't written by Paul doesn't mean it doesn't have weight.

It was written or dictated, there's some controversy about that, by Peter, probably in Rome, probably during the reign of Nero.

[1 : 22] And Peter is writing to the dispersed Christians in the northern provinces of Asia Minor, what we now call Turkey.

And his purpose is to counteract the materialism in its many forms that had crept into the church, was infiltrating it and undermining the witness of the Christians.

And to achieve this, he turns their minds to God and to heaven, reminding them and us that for God's people, holiness is how they and we should live.

But he does so with the reminder that we do not do so alone, that the full power of the Holy Trinity is available to help us.

And to encourage his readers, Paul reminds them of their situation. They are chosen.

[2 : 36] Now, this can be a thorny topic. Are people arbitrarily selected by God and everyone else consigned to perdition?

Double predestination or single, if you want the posh term for it. Do we have a choice?

To be or not to be? Well, I don't think God arbitrarily chooses people to come to heaven or go to hell.

I don't believe that. The scriptures contain so many statements about God's desire that all should be saved.

Not that all would be saved. But that they could be saved. The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for every man, woman and a child on the face of the earth.

[3 : 41] That it's not effective in everyone's life is another question. But we're chosen because God lives in eternity.

He knows who will be saved and who will not be saved. Who will accept salvation and who will refuse it.

We used to have a rather strange lady who used to phone up the office. Who would constantly say, I think I've committed the unforgivable sin.

She was odd. And we used to spend many hours on the phone trying to reassure her that if she was worried about it, she wasn't.

But people have often asked, what is it? What is this sin that cannot be forgiven? And I would suggest that it is the determined and persistent refusal to be forgiven.

[4 : 56] If you won't be forgiven, you can't be forgiven. You've got to come in humility to Christ to ask. And Peter says God knows already who that's going to be.

And that's the choice. Because God's family, which is what a Christian is a part of, is not exclusive. He's not proud, you know. One of the things that God isn't is proud. He ran to meet his son in the parable of the prodigal son.

Most undignified. All are welcome. From the gutters to the highest palace. All are welcome into the family of God.

Chosen. Not rejected. I mean, can you imagine yourselves going up to Buckingham Palace and saying, I'll come for tea. You can get past the main gate, would you?

[6 : 08] And yet, as God's children, you can come into God's presence anytime, anyplace.

Because his door is open to his children. Day or night. Instant access. We might look ordinary, nondescript.

But in God's sight, we are his children. We are precious to him. And we are loved by him. That is not something the world can give us.

Well, access to authority often depends on who we know. But it does mean whatever situation we are in, we can ask for help, for wisdom, for strength.

Whatever it is we need, God is there and he will help us in any situation. But when we become members of God's family, when we...

[7 : 28] We used to call it conversion. I don't know if they still do. When that dramatic change takes place in the life.

We're given gifts. Every Christian is given gifts. Intangible, but nonetheless real. New birth.

New birth. A heart transplant. The heart of stone is taken away and a heart of flesh is given.

And when the Bible's talking about the heart, it's not talking about that beating pump in the chest.

He's talking about the seat of all that we are and who we are.

Of emotions and spirituality. It is the core of our being. And that is changed.

[8 : 31] We now should view things, not from a worldly perspective, but from a heavenly perspective. Because we have ceased to be citizens of the world and we become citizens of heaven above.

We're given hope. Now in the Bible, hope's a strong word. I mean, if I was to say, I'm really looking forward to South End United lifting the FA Cup this year, you would say that's a faint hope.

It's not going to happen. But with the biblical hope, with the hope that God gives, it is sure and certain there's something that happened yesterday.

It just hasn't happened yet. But it is absolutely sure. And that's the hope he gives to us. It's not passive.

It's active. A living hope. And it's founded on and guaranteed by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's amazing.

[9 : 52] It's amazing. The resurrection guarantees our inheritance. Now normally, we receive an inheritance when someone dies.

This one we receive when we die because it's kept in heaven for us. It's not affected by inflation or taxes.

It can't perish, deteriorate or fade. And it's kept in heaven waiting for us. Something to look forward to.

In some parts of the world, then and now, being a Christian is not a cushy option.

And to be honest, I think it's going to become less cushy here. Although worldwide, the church is growing, so is hostility.

[10 : 58] We've seen it on social media where Christians are being beheaded. Because they were Christians and wouldn't renounce their faith. By its very nature, Christianity puts us at odds with the world.

The beliefs of Christianity cause the cardinal sin of the modern world. It offends people.

The gospel is offensive. Let's face it, nobody really likes being called a sinner. Nobody really likes being pointed out to them that if you reject Christ, there is no other place for you to go but hell.

They don't like it. And you can understand that. But rather than do something about it, they go through the messenger and don't receive the message.

But we are not alone. we are protected. And you might say, well, what about those who die because they're Christians who died for the faith?

[12 : 21] And that's a valid question. But remember this. God in Christ did not shun death. He suffered.

He died. We live in a temporal world and that affects our perception. God lives in a spiritual world.

A world we will inhabit eventually. But our spirit that sets us apart from the animals, it's our spirit that is eternal and it is our spirit that is defended.

I was reading Revelation. I read through the Bible every year and we've just got to that part of Revelation about the lake of fire.

and the eternal spirit of the Christian isn't destined for that.

[13:38] That's the second death. God protects us from that through the blood of Jesus Christ. We are spiritually safe because of God.

and he will continue to defend us until one of two things happens. We die or he comes.

Then we will be safe. And that should be a source of joy. It should be a source of encouragement to the Christian.

knowing our sins are forgiven. Knowing that we are reconciled with God. It should overwhelm us with the radiance of God's love.

But in the light of these benefits what should we do? Christianity after all is not a passive faith. we can't earn salvation but we can demonstrate it as individuals and as a group.

[15:00] The command we are given is to be holy because God is holy. God has many attributes. Some only he has like omniscience and omnipotence.

Others are communicable. we can have them. Now if you were to go out and do a sort of on the street survey of people and say what is the defining attribute of God?

I would put money and I'm not a betting man I would put money on most people saying love.

But God doesn't say love one another because I am love and he is. He says be holy because I am holy.

I don't think love is the defining attribute. I think holiness is. And from that characteristic all the others flow his love his justice all those things that we should desire in our own lives.

[16:29] but how do we become holy? There's no simple rule that can make us holy by being followed.

That has been tried many times. It leads to pride legalism coldness of heart exclusiveness and unnecessary guilt.

making a list of rules doesn't work. It's been tried so often and it doesn't lead to the warm fellowship that we should have with God and each other.

There are certain things we most certainly should not do because they're unholy. holiness doesn't come about by not doing things or doing things.

It comes about as a result of our relationship with God himself. One of the wonderful things about Christianity was the priesthood was done away with.

[17:49] Each one of us can come to God as an individual and have a personal relationship with God and it's in that developing of that relationship with God that our personal holiness develops as we as that old hymn put it so graphically take time to be holy speak oft with thy Lord.

God and in a world where there's time saving devices make us so busy and we feel guilty for resting see that for what it is it's a device to prevent you and me from spending time with God.

Sometimes even church activities can prevent that. we need to nurture our relationship with God and with those important people in our lives whose relationship needs to be nurtured too.

It's all part of the same thing. But as we spend time with God we will come to know ourselves better. You might not like what you see but we can do something about that.

Self control and self discipline those things that we are so attached to that hinder us in our relationship with God and often with other people.

[19:26] We all have some knowledge of what our besetting sin is so we need to when we see it reject evil which can be subtle but more positively we need to develop our relationship with God.

Don't let something become more important in your life than God. always look to the Lord Jesus Christ he is our constant companion ready to help us anytime any place and I know people do genuinely lead busy lives and I know when I first became a Christian I found some of the most unhelpful teaching was that you had to have your quiet time first thing in the morning I found that really unhelpful because what I had to do first thing in the morning didn't really give me time to spend time with God is this making of rules unnecessary guilt just find a time it might only be a few minutes just find a time in the day that you can spend with God just you and have a conversation with him you know the kids have been playing up tell him you're worried about the rent or the mortgage tell him he knows anyway and he loves you he will comfort you he will help you perhaps not in the way you would like but he will help you because he's a loving father and he wants to be treated like a father as well as God but that's what

Peter tells the people to do and tells us to do to be holy to develop our relationship with God but why should we be so out of step with the world so at odds with worldly wisdom well on the one hand you get people saying don't get angry get even and the Christian says don't get angry forgive why we have been redeemed at extraordinary cost the precious blood of Christ now there's a lot of controversy about historic slavery at the moment and one point that constantly gets made is that former slave owners were compensated for their loss that wasn't the perspective at the time what was done was those people were redeemed their freedom was purchased it was highly expensive we only finished paying the debt about 10 years ago but compared to what God paid for us that's peanuts the precious blood of Christ was the price that God was prepared to pay for you and for me we're valuable in his sight we were not only made free when he redeemed us we became citizens of heaven above this is not our home this is why so often we feel uncomfortable but we should behave at all times as if we are at home the world's way of dealing with something is not God's way and we are here to represent God because we are his children so that even unbelievers can see the difference

I remember years and years ago my cousin came to see us at our home and he was walking back to his car and I was just walking in front of him and he said Uncle Jeff that's my father and I said no he's still in the house and he just said you walk exactly like him I had the characteristics of my earthly father we should demonstrate to the world the characteristics of our heavenly father because that's home we represent him and that's why the world takes such delight in scandals that undermine the purity the holiness of the gospel as we've seen just lately it besmirches the name of God in the eyes of the world and our relationship with God should be evident in how we treat each other when a fellowship is at one with each other and God it is a powerful instrument in God's hands visitors should feel a warmth a vibrancy a welcome it should be a foretaste of heaven in hard times and good

[26 : 13] Christians should stand out because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as he guides us individually and as a fellowship representing him growing more like him out of gratitude and love we seek to glorify God and enjoy him forever to to!

to to!