

1 Peter 1:1-9

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[0 : 00] turn in our Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1. And could I get you to stand this afternoon for the reading of the Word?

Thank you. 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 1 through 9. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

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 souls.

[2 : 17] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. If Dave and Noah have not begun their journey home, they will.

Having been in Africa almost a week, and the word is that the preaching efforts, workshops, actually training men to train others to be expositors of the word, that work has gone very well.

And we want to rejoice in the goodness of God in that regard. Our series that we've been in this summer celebrating the gospel life together.

Over the past two weeks, Kevin Swartz and Jim White, thank you men for your ministry to our body, have helped us to see, first of all, that gospel living is godly living.

And secondly, the gospel living is joyful living. Timely, meaningful messages from God's word that you and I need to hear.

[3 : 34] And if you are a follower of Christ, by now you should know that the gospel life is indeed a rich life. Now, your socioeconomic status did not change, most likely, when you came to Christ.

I mean, if you came to Christ sort of needy or whatever class that you consider yourself in, that didn't change. But I would dare say that there probably were some cha-chings in heaven when you and I came to Christ.

Your Christian heritage, just in case you didn't know it, it includes the very abundant grace of God. Lavish mercy is your portion as a child of God.

And forgiveness, Romans chapter 2, verse 4 says, Or despises thou his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

I left out a word, the riches of his goodness. And mercy and longsuffering. That's your portion as a follower of Christ.

[4 : 52] These things, as we talked about in the beginning, they flow and they flow richly from the heart of a loving God that's made himself known, revealed himself, through the person and work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The writer before us knew something about gospel riches. He introduces himself as Peter. His father named him Simeon, though, or Simon.

Peter, the name means rock or rock like it. That was the nickname that Jesus gave him.

This Galilean fisherman was transformed into a fisher of men through the work of Jesus Christ.

And guess what? Peter eventually lived up to his name. As a rock in various aspects, including the fact that he was one of the foundation stones of the church of Jesus Christ.

[6 : 02] Two New Testament letters bear the name of Peter. Another, the gospel of Mark, has his imprint and influence there.

But if you notice today that the letter that we come to, it was written to Christians. It was written to believers. And it concerns Christian conduct in general, but Christian suffering in particular.

The message is to believers of all ages, both to them and to us, friends. And here's the message, that you and I should stand firm in God's grace in this world that includes suffering.

Notice the very end of the letter, if you will. Look at chapter 5 and verse 12. By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, what?

Exerting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. And notice what he tells them. Stand firm in it.

[7 : 21] Regardless of what's going on around you, stand firm in the grace of God. Eight times, the word grace appears in the letter.

From the beginning prayer, look at verse 2 of chapter 1. May grace and peace, and I love this petrine, this word that Peter uses, be multiplied to you.

Boy, I just think of, some of us know about multiplied mercy and grace. Huh? Huh? Just comes. It sort of hits you on this side and hits you on that side.

That's the nature of God's grace and his peace. Huh? So, notice chapter 4 and verse 10. We had this in the forum that we had before here.

It speaks of grace. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the varied, the many-colored grace of God.

[8 : 30] God's grace comes in various forms and shapes and sizes and the abundance of God's grace demands that there be many channels that that grace flows through.

And the giftings that God has given us are those avenues, are those conduits through which God's grace flows into the lives and to the experience of other believers. Huh?

God uses us as dispensers of his grace. But notice particularly in chapter 5 alone, not only do we see the mention of grace in verse 5, but verse 12, but look at verse 5.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders, clothe yourselves, all of you with humility, toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

And look at verse 10. And I remember holding on to this verse as a young Christian, still struggling a little bit with my faith, and with my experience.

[9 : 34] And this became one of those anchor verses for me. You ever had an anchor verse that you just held on to it with a sort of bulldog hold and so that you might realize and come to experience with this verse was proclaimed?

This was one of those for me. Listen. And after you had suffered a while, now, as a young teenager, I wasn't suffering any ways like what Peter's audience was doing.

But there's a real sense, friends, in which suffering is relative. Isn't it? Whereby our struggles may not have been exactly like theirs, but how many know a struggle when you feel it?

We do, don't we? We know challenges when we... And it is from those challenges that we find ourselves crying out to God. And that's what my young, seeking-to-be-sanctified soul did.

Huh? After you've suffered a little while, notice what? The God of grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself, what will He do?

[10 : 50] Restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. And guess what? That's what God did in my life and in my soul.

Huh? So, what am I saying? Peter writes to the end that the recipients of grace with through grace stand in the midst of a world where various trials, chapter 1, verse 6, cause grief.

Trials that cause grief. Now, in the letter, the trials were associated with discrimination and abuse because of their Christian commitment.

commitment. Those are challenges and trials that we face today because of our Christian commitment. And I'm going to talk some about that as we get on down into the message today.

But there are trials today that are associated with our stand for Christ. With our belief in this fallen world with its pluralistic kind of mindset and multiplicity of religious expressions.

[12 : 01] and you are holding on to Christ and Christ alone and finding hope in Him alone, you can be isolated and targeted for ostracism and criticism if you take that kind of stand.

I think that oftentimes we wimp out and are silent when we need to be speaking and are living somewhat raggedy.

You're all familiar with that term. Lives. When we should be living wholesome and godly lives. And not compromising. But what we see here applies elsewhere.

Have you had challenges in this past week that have caused a measure of grief or distress or downright stress?

How many know stress when you feel it? It has a way of working with your body. It works in certain ways. There are work-related woes and family-related frustration and spiritual witness worries and personality-related angst or anguish or temptation-related distress.

[13 : 20] We know about it, don't we? We're people seeking Christ, living out our faith. We know what these things feel like. But what Peter does in this book, he introduces the book in a manner through which the recipients who face these various trials are reminded of two things.

They're reminded of their identity on the one hand, but they're reminded of their inheritance on the other. And he comes across in a very winsome kind of way.

He doesn't initially hit them with various commands as far as what they do. He really presents a picture as to who they are and what they have. And that in itself has a way of strengthening and comforting us who really get in touch with our identity and when we really understand our inheritance that has been provided for us through Christ.

Huh? So here, he helps us to see that our identity is a spiritual identity and that our inheritance is eternal.

We, people in this world, facing various trials, our identity is spiritual. Now, certainly we have an ethnic identity and we may have a socioeconomic identity, but yeah, those things aside, we have a spiritual identity and we have an inheritance that is eternal.

[14 : 59] And guess what, friends? Coming to grips with those very things helps our momentum in this world, our going forward with a certain measure of strength, with a certain measure of confidence, huh?

That helps us to stand firm in the riches of God's grace. Notice the text with me. The writer's Peter. He identifies himself as such in verse 1.

He is an apostle. He is a person who was commissioned and the apostles, one of the ways of putting it, they were Jesus' leadership team. That's what they were.

He was sent on a mission. But it's worth noting, friends, that not only was Peter commissioned by Jesus, he had experienced Jesus also.

His love, his mercy, his grace and forgiveness. And though Peter's experience had not been, his audience had not been commissioned like he was, huh?

[16 : 07] And had experienced Jesus as he had, nonetheless, they had experienced Jesus too. As a matter of fact, look on down in the text, look at chapter 1, verse 8. And their experience more parallels ours in this regard.

Now, Peter had eaten with Jesus, he had heard Jesus teach, I mean, he was on the Mount of Transfiguration, I mean, he walked on the Sea of Galilee to Jesus. His audience, none of those things and none of us have experienced those things either.

But there are some things that you and I have experienced of Jesus. Look at verse 8. Though you have not seen him, huh? You love him. Is that your experience?

Huh? Sure it is. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Is that your experience? Like them, we have not seen Christ, we don't see him now, huh? How is it that we love this one whom we have not laid our eyes on?

[17 : 18] How can we love this person we don't even have a snapshot of him? John put it well, we love him because he first loved us. Because we have been recipients of his love and we are responders to the very love of Christ, huh?

The saints of God, huh? We love him, we love his character, we love his ways, he is altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful, he loved us with an irresistible love, he loved me, ere I knew him, as the songwriter put it, all my love is due him.

The saints of God through the ages love him who they have not seen, and believe in him, and rejoice in him, huh? Who they have not seen.

Jesus calls such persons blessed. We love him, we haven't seen him, we are compelled to love him, who has loved us with an eternal love.

We love him, we believe in him, and this joy that we have in him is inexpressible and full of glory, huh? That should be, trust, it is, the experience of a believer today, that Peter had in common with the ones he writes to, and the believers of all ages, this comes into view.

[18 : 46] But notice the recipients, chapter 1 and verse 1, the next point. Who are they? Who is it that Peter is actually writing to?

They are described in a couple of different ways. First of all, you see them from a theological perspective, and then you see them from a geographical perspective.

The first word is they are exiles, that's the word in the text. They are elect, they are hand-picked, that's the idea, they are chosen, and this is the first term that Peter uses in his letter that connects his audience with the Old Testament people of God.

He uses several terms that were used exclusively of the Old Testament people of God, but he applies them to the New Testament people of God, the church.

Only Israel was known as the elect, the chosen of God. Notice some additional terms. Look at chapter 2 in verse 9. You see this pattern in the letter of his using these terms for the Old Testament people of God, and he sort of lumps several together in chapter 2 and verse 9.

[20 : 00] Look at those with me. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Again, he clumps together several of those terms that were used for the Old Testament people of God, and he applies them to people of God in his day, and thus to us.

Peter's designation of his audience as exiles is a reminder to him and them, in this world, they were temporary residents.

This world was not their home. While they were in the world, they were not of this world. Exiles here. They were people, and the idea there is that they were resident foreigners.

They were strangers. It's like those in our country who may possess what's known as a green card. They get that green card for school, for work, or for special kinds of assignments, but that card, one of these days, you're going to have to leave.

[21 : 19] This country is not a permanent place of residence for them, and even so, with the people of God. That's his idea.

So Peter writes to those who have been picked out, selected by God. They're resident foreigners, they're sojourners, they're a place that ultimately they could not call home people in exile.

Isn't that what we are? This world is not our home. Paul put it so well in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 20. He says this, our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and what will he do?

He will transform this lowly body, this lowly earth suit that serves us well here, but we will have no use for these lumps of clay there, at least in this form, to be like his body of glory, his glorious body, a body fit for glory.

How's he going to do it? By the working whereby he is able to transform all things to himself. Huh? They're exiles, but they're exiles of the dispersion.

[22 : 39] They're scattered abroad. So additionally, there were exiles of the dispersion just as the ancient Israelites were dispersed among the nations, and they were so because of their disobedience.

So the new people of God are likewise scattered, not because of their disobedience, but just focusing in on the scattered, the dispersed piece there. From God's point of view, a theological perspective, they were chosen by God, they were away from their real home.

But you also see in the verse, the geographical perspective as it relates to geography. You see the five provinces that they were from, and these were what's known as modern-day Turkey, just above the Taurus mountains there, in Asia Minor, and so that's where they were from.

It's interesting to see. Turn over in Acts chapter 2 and verse 9. I found this very interesting, that three of the five regions that are mentioned in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 2 are mentioned in Acts chapter 2 and verse 9, and this is when Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost.

There were Jews from these regions that were there, and the question is, could these have gone back, and a church had been started on the basis of that small nucleus there?

[24 : 08] We don't know, but it is an interesting piece. Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, they were there on the day of Pentecost hearing Peter's message there.

Peter's message is to those who have been picked out or selected by God. They're resident foreigners, sojourners. They're at a place to which they ultimately do not belong.

They're scattered and dispersed in the regions that are noted. These are the ones to whom he writes. They are believers just like you and me. But notice in verse 2, the basis for their heavenly citizenship comes into view in verse 2.

Their election was based on a divine initiative that God had in eternity past. Look at the verse there. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for the sprinkling of his blood.

Did you notice the work of the Trinity in that particular verse? Both father, the Spirit and the Son come into view? And check this out brothers and sisters.

[25 : 31] If you were to trace your salvation from the experience of your forgiveness and being cleansed by the blood of Christ and you could see even before that the working of the Spirit of God in various and wondrous ways to lead you to the cross.

But if you were to trace it back further and further than that, you could trace it back to eternity where God has set his love upon you as a believer.

And what a message, what a comfort this kind of word is coming to these people who are under trial to know that they are just not in the Christian faith by happenstance but God from eternity past had set his love upon them and through the marvelous working of his Spirit had led them to the cross and to the obedience to Christ.

There are more things that we could say about that but the clock is ticking. But he continues in this typical fashion praying desiring that God's grace would be multiplied to his people.

You see that there. Those who embrace the message of the book would indeed be recipients of divine bounty. But before I move from this section there's just several things regarding application that I believe that really speak to you and me here this afternoon.

[27 : 02] That when you and I are facing various kinds of challenges that relate to our Christian faith or not we must not forget who we are. Don't lose sight of your identity.

That you are a citizen of heaven. That your identity is primarily from God's perspective it is a spiritual identity.

And because of that we will seem like foreigners to many who are in this world. Your conduct will be foreign.

How many have ever been in a foreign country and you have tried a little bit to grasp the language and you just can and even some perhaps who have come from far they speak with an accent.

And speaking with an accent can be sort of difficult and it calls a lot of attention to yourself. And it's hard to sometimes it's hard to understand people with an accent.

[28 : 04] And that one that distinguishes us and may cause people to think you're not from around here are you? And that's what people think.

Well in a similar sense our moral and spiritual accent should in fact distinguish us that this world is not our home.

People should in some ways count us strange because we don't fit into necessarily the contours of this world and in this life. People with an accent get picked on.

And sometimes they get ridiculed and they get ostracized. Because we value being people of our word some people will ostracize us.

That may seem strange to I mean you really? You gonna do what you said you're gonna do? Some people find it strange that we are faithful to our marriage vows and surely thou will celebrate 41 years of marriage.

[29 : 11] I was talking to another person a friend on the other day and they're gonna celebrate 41 years of marriage too. And that's sort of a strange deal. And you've been married how many times?

Just once praise the Lord. And if you've been married a while you know that married once is enough indeed isn't it? Huh? Takes a lifetime to sort of to learn them and to grow with them.

But they think it's strange. Huh? The way that you may use even technology honorably and not for some of this scudsy stuff that's being used.

They think you're strange. They think it's strange because you maintain your sexual purity. They think you're strange into this world.

You're sort of like talking with a moral and a spiritual accent to them because of your stand. Huh? But we must not be ashamed of our moral and spiritual accent in this world.

[30 : 20] We must not alter our identity to fit in. We must have another thing that people do in this world to fit in.

They change their name. They sort of get rid of shed that maybe ethnic identity, chop it off a little, abbreviate it so you won't know their ethnic origin so that you can just assimilate with everybody else.

But you and I must live with a Christian distinctiveness in this world regardless of the costs that are associated with it. But doing so can be a direct cause of trials in this life.

Don't forget your heavenly identity. But also you and I must remember that we have a heavenly inheritance. Look at verse 3. There's a lot here.

We're not going to go through all of it. But look at verse 3. Let me read it. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy.

[31 : 23] He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who buys God's power of being guarded.

Listen to that. Through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Peter's greeted the recipients of the letter.

and then he breaks into this doxology. I love the way the writers of scripture do this. Paul does that beginning of his letters. You see that in Ephesians chapter 3.

This doxology and he begins to roll out all of the credits of God as far as his mercy and kindness and grace and all of those goodies. Peter does the same thing here.

And he calls for God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be celebrated in view of all of these things. Paul, he calls for praise of God in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3.

[32 : 32] He says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. You see the pattern, the trend.

I mean, this was sort of a normal kind of pattern to the opening of a letter in that day. He acknowledges God's worth through mercy that has caused believers to be birthed again, a spiritual birth.

I mean, birth within itself is so radical and that's sort of the idea in a spiritual sense. It has thrust us into a new realm. It has thrust us into a new relationship.

The one who saves us is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whose mercy is great. He's not only the source of mercy but new birth comes through him that results in a new life and entrance into a living hope, hope that doesn't fade, hope that doesn't end with this life.

It's not terminal with this life, but it runs through the tape of life into the next life. It's a hope that doesn't dwindle, it doesn't dim, hope that it's lasting, it's enduring, it's hope with a strong pulse beat.

[33 : 57] It's an eternal kind of hope. It's hope that's living. It's as sure as the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. That's the guarantee of our certain future, our expectation, our hope is alive because Jesus himself is alive.

Then we look at verses 4 and 5, what we see here, we get a peek of the nature of the inheritance of those who are born again, who have this inheritance, people who possess this life.

The nature of our heavenly inheritance comes through clearly in verses 4 and 5. Ours is an eternal inheritance. The shape of our economy these days has meant that earthly inheritance have dwindled.

some. I heard about the college savings of some dwindled away because of the fading nature of things below.

Retirement monies have been slashed. Some people, retirees, have gone back into the job market because of the nature of the fading, dwindling, perishable nature of things in this life.

[35 : 16] But unlike the fleeting changes of this life that crumble and perish and are contaminated and fade, what we have in store for us, it's inflation proof and rust proof and only our heavenly inheritance is that which remains intact.

It's permanent. It's pure. It's not like the once brilliant garment that gets washed and it's faded.

Or a lustrous flower that loses its color. No. And wilts. It's brilliant. That's the inheritance.

The permanence of heaven contrasts with the fleeting things of this life and even the most precious things that we have in this life are perishable.

divine preservation not only concerns our heavenly inheritance but look at verse 5. You are being preserved or guarded by God's power through faith and to a prepared salvation that will be fully unveiled in the last time.

[36 : 33] the preserving power of faith comes to light here. The idea of preservation is further emphasized through the word that we see there. It's guarded. Believers and this is your part by faith are preserved for the full expression of the great salvation that we've been given by our Lord.

It's kept in heaven but those people of faith are guarded on earth those who have been purchased will be preserved.

And it will be and that preservation it's sort of the key to that preservation it's access according to this text through faith. There remains a phase of salvation that awaits us as the people of God.

Everything that goes along with salvation is not in our possession now. Certainly we possess a certain thing but the best is yet to come. More to come.

Now are we the children of God John writes and it does not appear what we shall be. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him. We'll seem as he is.

[37 : 47] Huh? As Christians there are certain things that should galvanize us in this world people particularly when faced with trials that challenge our faithful witness to Christ.

Don't forget your identity. Don't forget your inheritance. Those kinds of things have a way again helping us with our momentum and strengthening us to stand firm in the grace that's been provided for us here and now.

Up front in this letter Peter reminds his hearers his audience of their heavenly citizenship and while picked on in this world they have been picked out by God picked out by him chosen by him and that can be traced back into eternity past predestined marked out for his love and favor and an eternal inheritance awaited them also.

That's not just for them friends it's for us. Don't forget your identity. Don't forget your inheritance. Stand firm in grace based on your identity though you're in this world you belong to another world.

Stand firm in grace based on your inheritance while you may lose out here and eternal inheritance awaits you beyond this life.

[39 : 24] May you be comforted may you be strengthened by those things. So what then is the nature of the gospel life that we see from this particular text simply this gospel living is faith filled grace empowered living on foreign soil in anticipation of our future inheritance.

That's what it is. That's what you and I have come to. Gospel living is faith filled grace empowered living on foreign soil foreign territory even as we anticipate our future inheritance.

Gospel living is expectant living. and as we look forward as we look up and look out and look beyond you and I can be strengthened in the midst of whatever nature the various trials of life whatever shape they may take in your life.

And may the Lord give us grace to see these realities embrace them to live them out in our lives. Won't you pray? with me.

Dear Lord praise you for this somewhat high level kind of view that we have from this particular text Lord of our spiritual identity is spiritual and our inheritance is eternal.

[41 : 13] Lord may we be mindful of these things and that this world is not our home and may our conduct in this world reflect an understanding thing that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven where you are and Lord we are sojourners here we're resident aliens we are foreigners here and as foreigners go we may seem strange we may talk strange we may live strange help us Lord in view of that kind of foreignness to know how to posture ourselves and to position ourselves here regardless of the context may each one

Lord come to embrace with fresh understanding who we are whose kingdom we are part of and what has been laid up in store for us that's not ravished by rust or moth and it's a place where thieves whether quite collar or blue collar or no collar they don't break through and steal it because it is preserved and we are guarded by faith even as we face the storms of life and the trials of life oh God help us to be strong in you and in the power of your might help us to stand firm in grace oh what a place to stand there's no better place to stand than in your favor Lord we commit ourselves to you pray that you'd strengthen fathers here mothers here children here pray that you would strengthen workers here

I pray that you would strengthen regardless of our profession Lord you know us in our neighborhoods where we need to stand strong you know the various venues of life that call for this kind of witness based on our identity and our inheritance may that be our portion may that be our stand pray these things Lord Jesus in your name amen let's pray the song that's before us asking God to really purify our hearts stand with me on through