

Chosen Strangers Made alive by God

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Preacher: Rev Gordon Kennedy

- [0 : 0 0] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence.! May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher,! and your great glory our supreme concern.
- Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Over the next few weeks, we're going to be reading in our Sunday services this first letter of Peter.
- To the church. And usually on this first Sunday, I would mention there's only five chapters. So you could read a chapter every day. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. And that would be a blessing to you and a blessing to our services together.
- However, for two weeks, I've got a special offer. Because for the next two Sundays, we're going to read the same 12 verses we read today.
- So for the next two weeks, how about 12 verses a day? 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 1 to verse 12. I guarantee, if you make just a short time to read those 12 verses every day, God's spirit will bless you.
- [1 : 1 6] And God's spirit will bless our times together on the next two Sundays. Then we can get to the one chapter a day for five days. But for two weeks, just 12 verses. How about that?
- Two seems to be a big thing. For two weeks back in January 2004, which frighteningly is now 20 years ago, I was an alien.
- You're thinking to yourself, he's always been a bit strange. But I was visiting Peru with the Vine Trust to visit some mission work there. And just about an hour before we landed in Lima, the flight attendant came round with a form that you had to fill in so that you would be allowed in the country.
- And there was a box you had to take which described me as an alien. It is a strange experience being an alien.
- You don't know things about your situation or your surroundings that you might know at home. Everything feels different and strange.
- [2 : 2 3] You are the one who stands out from everybody else. You are the different one. You are the alien. Peter's letter, he tells us, is written to those who are strangers in the world.
- The word could be aliens in the world. Exiles who are in fact the church. What does it mean for us to live as the church of Jesus Christ in this world?
- A world where we are the ones who are strangers and aliens. We have a memory, how true it was, I'm not sure, that at one time some years ago, there were a majority of Christians in Scotland.
- Today that's not the case. Less than 5% of the population of Scotland have any active connection with a Christian church of any kind.
- And so the situation we live in in 2024 is directly comparable to that of the first readers of this first letter of Peter.
- [3 : 4 1] He was writing to folks who were strangers and exiles in the world. A minority in the world. And that's who we are. This is the situation in which God calls us and empowers us to live as his children.

Living disciples of the living Lord Jesus, but in a strange world. Peter's letter is written for people who want to live.

The call of the gospel is that we enter the kingdom of God and we live there. Peter writes his letter to encourage us to be alive and active, living as God's people in God's kingdom.

Survival is not enough. Living is the call upon our lives. These verses which we read together today and which we're going to read the next two Sundays have been described as the foundation for our Christian life.

Like a deeply dug, well-laid set of foundation stones, these verses are absolutely strong enough to bear the load of the Christian life we build on them.

[5 : 05] Strong and healthy disciples are not those only who build strong foundations. I'm sure you've driven past or been on the bus and you go past a site and there's a foundation on the ground.

And I wonder if you think to yourself, that's a really nice foundation. That looks great. But you'd never think that's it finished. You would think they've made a good beginning.

There's a good start there. I wonder what they're going to build on it. The purpose of a foundation is to build something on it.

Strong and healthy disciples build vibrant, active, living, faithful, winsome Christian lives on the foundation which God has laid for us in Jesus Christ our Savior.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has called us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[6 : 24] God is too vague a term in 2024. Too many people speak about God and they all mean different things by that word.

We need to say something more than just the word God. God is named the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is named the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The source, the beginning of all things. The beginning of our salvation, our hope, our life.

There is not one God who is God of the Old Testament and a different God who is God of the New Testament. There is one God made known to us in the whole of Scripture.

One God made known to us in Jesus Christ our Savior. Peter has come to know God in relation to Jesus.

[7 : 34] The Jesus who walked with Peter, who slept on a boat with Peter, who taught Peter to catch fish, who called Peter to get out of the boat and walk on the water, who at the end called Peter to leave behind the fish because he loved Jesus more than these.

Jesus is God. The God who blesses Peter and all of us is this God, the Father of this Jesus. according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again.

Peter writes to tell us that this great God has been at work for us. He is doing things for you and for me, not because he must, but because he has mercy upon us.

That we are alive at all in Christ begins with God. Born again. Is there a bigger change that happens in our life than the change from being unborn to being born?

Our lives, if we are made new in Christ, are made wholly different from what they were before. It is like the change from prenatal to postnatal.

[9 : 04] And God has done this. God is the actor in this action. It is God who is doing whatever is being done. He brings us to new birth.

This next bit is absolutely true. I did one time meet a young father who told me how exhausting he found the birth of his daughter to be. I sincerely hope he didn't say that to his wife or his mother-in-law.

There are many things a child may wonder as they grow up. Am I doing this right? Do I know who I am? What is my place in the world?

But they never have to wonder about whether or not they are born. They never have to wonder if it was done right.

If they did it right. Because they didn't do it. It was done to them. Why then do so many Christians live with doubt about being Christian and about our new birth?

[10 : 22] Does God love you? Did Christ die for you? Has the Father promised to bring you to new birth? Is it at all imaginable that God will not keep this promise?

this. This is God's work which he has done for you in Jesus your saviour. It cannot fail.

If you are a Christian that is because of the things God has already done for you. Did this through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It was just one step. One small step for the Lord Jesus across the threshold of the tomb but a giant leap for all humanity and all creation.

A change that can now never be undone. All things are made new because Christ is risen and is alive. The resurrection is the sign that God has won.

[11 : 28] The victory is his. Leaving behind the empty tomb the Lord Jesus begins the triumph of God in the arrival of the kingdom of God.

There's a photo of Jill's nephew on the Kathleen Ferrier homepage and he's got a medal on his jacket. Can we not imagine the next time he comes to meet the family he might just have it in his pocket.

look what I won and nobody would blame him. In the victory of the resurrection God picks you up in his hand holds you out before all creation and says look what I've won.

Look what Jesus won in the resurrection. These people these made new and living disciples these are the victory that I have won for which my son died and rose again.

You are in his hand. You are the one he holds out and says see what I have done. You are the jewel in God's crown.

[12 : 48] Have some confidence in this. There is one God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He makes us alive in Jesus through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

These are the building blocks the foundation stones for our Christian life. Which of them is cracked and chipped and weak? Which of them will fail under the weight of your Christian living?

This God is your rock. Leaving behind our former ways of life we can enter into his kingdom and have this strong foundation for our lives.

We are not building on sand. You cannot live in a living hope apart from this God and the foundation he is for you.

Come quickly to him. Being alive begins with God but the point of being alive is to live it. God didn't make us alive and then transport us directly to heaven as though he had some Mr.

[14 : 00] Scott beam them up Scotty and we went straight to heaven. God makes us alive in Jesus gives us a foundation in this life so that we will live as strangers in this world.

We are to live in our living hope here and now. Peter writes about an inheritance that is kept for us.

In the Roman world of Peter's time the son of a Roman father got to enjoy his inheritance right now. He would bear a signet ring and could use it to lean into his inheritance.

We tend to push too much of our Christian inheritance too far into the future. We don't live today as though we were heirs of the father as though we are those who are inheriting from God.

The life of the Lord Jesus between Bethlehem and Calvary is a life lived in this inheritance. He heals the sick, he raises the dead, he gives sight to the blind, he makes the father known.

[15 : 14] This is what it means to live in the inheritance of the kingdom of God. God promises us this kind of life and calls us to live in it.

Our inheritance in God is contrasted with what the world can offer, that which is perishable and defiled and feeding. Ours is imperishable, undefiled, unfeeling.

How many sons and daughters have lived in the hope of an inheritance and have had it dashed in some storm when the father's ship went down and all his property with it.

But this inheritance our God has promised us will last for all time. It will remain true and valuable. It will always shine for us of the father's love.

This is how we are to live, those who have an inheritance from the father. We are to live as those kept by God, guarded by God's power for that inheritance.

[16 : 25] Peter does not write in verses 4 and 5 about the inheritance being guarded, as though there was a strong room somewhere and all of God's goods had been stored up and the door was locked and there was a guard on the door.

It's not the inheritance that's been guarded, it's us. God has taken hold of us in Jesus, made us those who will inherit from him and he keeps hold of us so that we will definitely inherit from him all that he has promised.

God loves you so much that he will not fail to keep you and guard you that you might receive from him. All this is kept in heaven for us.

Heaven in the New Testament is not a place in the future, it is God's will being done, which is what we pray for every week. Our inheritance is kept for us in the will and pleasure of God.

The fullness of our inheritance awaits the end time, but the resurrection of the Lord Jesus introduces that end time into our days now.

[17 : 43] The time of overlap between the age of the world and the age of the resurrection, like that eclipse, will overlap until one overtakes the other.

But until that day, we live in hope and faith. Faith is the gift of God enlivened within us by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may lay hold of the promises of God.

God gives faith and makes it work, and this is why we are confident that we have the right kind of faith. Hope is about life lived looking forward.

Where despair looks forward from an uncertain past and a bleak present, hope looks forward from a sure and certain past, a present in which we know we are loved by God and have been brought to new life through his mercy.

This hope, a living hope, changes how we live today. We live today certain of the work of God for us.

[18 : 58] Are we not certain of God, his great mercy, his kindness and goodness for us? Do we not know that God has brought us to new life in Jesus?

Do we not know that the same power which brings us to new life in Jesus is that power which raised Jesus alive again from the dead? These things give us hope for today, living hope.

Because God has done all this, all the other promises that he makes us will be yes for us in Jesus. We are living hope people.

And that alone makes us strangers in a world where there is a hope deficit. Don't you think it would be good for us to live with our neighbors and our friends as people of hope?

hope to be living examples for them of yes, you can have hope on a sure foundation of a certain future. Don't you think that would transform our nation and our city?

[20 : 17] We are to live as God's strangers in this world. People of hope, people of faith, people who are born new in the all new kingdom of God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, burn these words in our hearts and our minds, words that you have written. May they take root there and bear rich fruit for your glory.

Father, make us people of hope, who through our faith and hope transform the world around us for your glory. Hear our prayers, for we ask them in Jesus' name.

Amen.