

AM 1 Peter 1:1-21 Living in the Light of the Future

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[0 : 0 0] to the first letter of Peter. 1 Peter chapter 1. 1 Peter chapter 1.

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, in 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 a 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 honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him, now 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 : 2 2] Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy. And if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

[4 : 1 0] He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his word and to his name be the praise. Shall we come before the Lord again in prayer?

Let us pray. O Lord, we thank you that you are a speaking God, that you have revealed your purposes to us in and through the pages of Scripture.

We thank you that that word, though it was written over many hundreds of years, such a long time ago, is still relevant to us because it is the living word of the living God.

Our prayer is that you would make your word live to us. May it live in our experience. May we heed it and may we live in the light of it.

[5 : 47] We thank you again that you are king, king over this world which you have made. Lord, we pray for our troubled world.

We pray for the situation in Israel. Lord, we ask that a just peace may be secured there.

We pray for those of your people who are caught up in this conflict on both sides. Lord, we pray that you would grant them your grace in this difficult situation.

We ask that many who are caught up in the conflict may come to recognize the one who came into our world some 2,000 years ago who lived in that part of the world and came to bring life and forgiveness to all who put their trust in him.

May there be many who come to bow before the Messiah whom you sent.

[7 : 20] Lord, we pray for our own nation. We ask, Lord, that you would bless those who are in authority over us.

We pray for the new government in Westminster, for our government in Holyrood. We pray for the king and the royal house.

Lord, we ask that they may come to see their need of wisdom which only you can give. Bring them to an end of their own resources so that they might put their trust in you, the living God, and govern in your fear.

We pray for those evangelistic initiatives which have been taking place up and down the country and are still going on. We ask, Lord, that you would follow with your blessing the beach missions, the outreaches, the camps that have been and are being held.

Lord, may they be used to reach many with the gospel. And as churches settle, begin to settle back for another session of activity, we pray that above everything else they may know your blessing.

[9 : 02] May your spirit accompany your word and open blind eyes, soft and hard hearts and unstop deaf ears.

We pray for ourselves, you know our needs, we ask, Lord, that you would grant us grace to meet whatever need we have.

We pray for any known to us who are unwell, grant them your healing, we pray, if that is your will. we pray too for those who mourn, we remember the family and friends of Stanley Stewart, we ask Lord that you would comfort them, and we pray for Robert Dale as he takes the funeral tomorrow week, that you would help him, and that you would use that service to bless those who are present.

And now Lord, as we turn to look at your word together, how we need your help, we pray that you would direct and focus our minds.

may we hear what you have to say, and with your servant Samuel, may we say, speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

[10 : 47] We ask it in Jesus name and for his sake, Amen. We shall sing again this time in Psalm 73b, Psalm 73b on page 96, verses 21 to 28, when my spirit was embittered and my heart with grief brought low, like a beast I was before you, dull, in understanding slow, yet, O Lord, you hold my right hand, with you I will always go, to your glory you will bring me with your counsel as my guide, I have none but you in heaven, all on earth I lay aside, flesh and heart may fail, but ever God my portion will abide.

These verses of Psalm 73, when my spirit was embittered. Let's turn back with me in your Bibles to the passage we read together, 1 Peter chapter 1.

1 Peter chapter 1, which I'd like to look at with you, to look at with you under the title, Living in the Light of the Future.

Living in the Light of the Future. This letter was written by Jesus' disciple Peter.

He introduces himself as Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Christ. He's writing to Christians who are scattered over a wide area of what is modern Turkey.

[12 : 54] The world they lived in was very different from the world we know today. And yet, what Peter has to say to these Christians is as relevant to us as it was to them.

I'd like to consider with you this morning four things that Peter has to say about these Christians. Four things.

First, their identity. Secondly, their hope. Thirdly, their experience.

And fourthly, their response. Their identity. Their hope. Their experience.

And their response. First of all, then, in verses 1 and 2, their identity. How does Peter describe these Christians?

[14 : 01] He writes, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ, and for sprinkling with his blood.

Peter describes these Christians as elect exiles. Elect exiles. Exiles are people who are living away from the place they call home.

Across the centuries, sadly, there have been many occasions when Christians have had to flee their homes on account of persecution. That was the case very early on in the history of the church in Jerusalem.

Acts chapter 8 tells us how a severe persecution arose after the first martyr Stephen was stoned to death.

And as a result, the Christians in Jerusalem were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. It's not clear that the people to whom Peter is writing were exiles because they had had to flee persecution.

[15 : 35] Certainly, they weren't having an easy time of it and Peter warns them that things are likely to become even harder.

It may be that these Christians in what is now modern Turkey weren't exiles at all.

They may not have been actual literal exiles. Peter may have been thinking of them as exiles in a spiritual sense.

That's because they didn't truly belong in this world. Their allegiance was to the Lord.

And as a result, they were out of step with the values and outlooks of this world. But they're not just exiles.

[16 : 39] They're elect exiles. They are chosen exiles. They have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. God the Father has set his love upon each one of them in eternity past.

Not only that, they have been chosen in the sanctification of the Spirit. Peter may mean that God's Spirit has set them apart for God's service.

the word sanctification can mean that in the New Testament. Or Peter may mean that they are being sanctified, that they are being made holy by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Probably Peter has both ideas in mind. His Christian friends have been set apart for God. And God's Spirit is at work in them to make them progressively more like the Lord Jesus.

And Peter doesn't stop there. He says they have been chosen for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.

[18 : 07] blood. They have been sprinkled by Jesus' blood. In the sense that they are identified with Jesus in his death.

His blood has washed away their sins because he bore the punishment of sin in his body on the cross.

Through faith they have received a full and free forgiveness. They have been sprinkled by Jesus' blood.

He is their saviour. Not only is he their saviour he is their Lord. They have been chosen for obedience to Jesus Christ.

now that they are his disciples they seek to obey what he commands. Think of the words of the great commission.

[19 : 08] Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey whatever I have commanded.

it. These Christians are elect exiles. They are at best temporary residents where they live but they have an identity because they are loved by the triune God Father Son and Holy Spirit.

They may no longer conform to the values and world views of this present evil age but they are in relationship with Father Son and Holy Spirit.

God the Father set his love upon them. God the Son has redeemed them and God the Holy Spirit applies to them the salvation which the Father planned and the Son has purchased.

Elect exiles. That's what we are if we are Christians. We are strangers. In a sense we are strangers in the world but on the other hand we are the recipients of amazing blessings from a generous God.

[20 : 56] is that your identity this morning? That is the identity of all who are Christians because we are in relationship with the God who loved us and who has promised to go on loving those whom he has brought into his family.

That's these Christians identity. Second in verses 3-6 Peter reminds his readers of their hope.

Verse 3 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 our salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

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

Jesus' resurrection is crucial to the hope of these Christians. It is crucial to what Peter describes here as their inheritance while it was through his death the Lord Jesus paid the penalty of sin on behalf of all who would put their trust in him.

[23 : 00] His resurrection proves his sacrifice was accepted and was effective and having died the death of the cross he now shares his resurrection life with his people.

How does an old hymn put it made like him like him we rise ours the cross the grave the skies just as Christ has been raised from the dead so we too shall be raised his resurrection guarantees our resurrection and the inheritance that awaits us in heaven this is the living hope to which we have been born again Peter describes this inheritance as imperishable undefiled and unfading the NIV translation is more vivid it speaks of an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade the inheritance of eternal life in the world to come is sure it can be counted on nothing can tarnish or extinguish it inheritances in this world are not like that the person who is disposed to give an inheritance may change their mind at any time and alter things at the stroke of a pen or the person who is going to receive an inheritance may die before that inheritance becomes available if you visit any number of stately homes in this country you hear how the estate didn't pass neatly down through the generations sometimes it went to members of the family who were quite distant from those who previously owned it but the inheritance of which

Peter speaks is quite different it's underwritten by God himself it is in Peter's words kept in heaven for you the inheritance is safe but so too are the recipients Peter tells his Christian friends that they are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time you see both they and their inheritance are under God's protection God's purpose is to bring each one of his sons and daughters safely home to glory and his power will bring that about you've probably heard of the three tenses of salvation past present and future past tense we were saved we were saved when we put our faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ present tense we are being saved our salvation is being worked out in the present as we walk by faith and as God molds and matures us future tense we will be saved that in particular is what Peter has in mind here when he speaks of our being guarded through faith for our salvation ready to be revealed in the last time you see it's only when Jesus returns that salvation will be experienced in all its fullness only then will we live in God's nearer presence entirely free from sin and the damage it has caused this is our hope the future dimension of salvation and it's available to all people who call on the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ their identity their hope thirdly in verses 6 to 12 Peter turns to the present experience of his Christian friends their experience life it's clear from verse 6 that they're not having an easy time of it now for a little while Peter writes if necessary you have been grieved by various trials life is not plain sailing for these Christians we don't know exactly what difficulties they were encountering but what they were experiencing appeared in some ways very different from the hope which

[29 : 12] Peter had been reminding them about in the previous verses they are suffering the New Testament indicates time and again that trials and difficulties are part and parcel of the Christian life didn't Jesus himself say that we were to take up our cross and follow him here in his letter Peter has several things to say about these difficulties and trials the Christians are going through first of all he reminds them in verse 6 that these difficulties won't last forever now for a little while if necessary you have been grieved by various trials he wants to assure them that these trials will come to an end but he also points out to them that these trials are not random they're not purposeless

God is using them for their good look at what he says in verse 7 the purpose of the trials is 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 honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ Peter points out how gold is purified and refined in a furnace the intense heat of the flame separates out the metal from the dross which may be sticking to it in a similar way our faith is tested and refined through the difficulties that come our way genuine faith holds up under pressure that's the case even though at times it is being tested almost to breaking point psalm 73 illustrates that the psalmist had faith in

God but he was deeply disturbed that the people around him who seemed to have no time for God had a much easier life of it than he had he tells us that he almost lost his faith but as for me he writes my feet had almost stumbled my steps had nearly slipped it was only when he came to recognize that this life is not all there is that his spiritual equilibrium was restored God's judgment could fall on the godless at any time and the psalmist also came to see that he hadn't reckoned with the realities of his situation he came to see that he was held and upheld by God we sang about that

God was guiding his life and afterwards he would receive him to glory the psalmist faith was tested it was put under pressure but by God's grace his faith withstood the pressure it was shown to be genuine and in fact his faith was strengthened faith is like a muscle it grows by being exercised revised having spoken about the revelation of

Jesus Christ his return he writes though you have not seen him you love him though you do not see him now you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory these Christians believe in a saviour they cannot see they love him although they can't see him that is in some respects hard and non-Christians may find it very difficult to understand but Peter is making the point that even although Jesus is unseen, even although they have never seen him they know the reality of his presence because they love him they believe in him and they rejoice in him they have a supernatural joy they cannot deny the relationship they have with the living God through him it reminds me of what a friend of mine said regarding his own conversion he was brought up in a high Anglican church background but as a young teenager he went along to a local Baptist church and in John's own words he heard the gospel for the first time he not only heard it and as he says

[37 : 42] I left that meeting knowing God knowing the unseen God there are tensions in the Christian life tensions in our experience we have a great hope we have a great hope but we may suffer trials and difficulties here and now we have an unseen God but we have the witness of his spirit in our hearts his spirit testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God even here and now these Christians to whom Peter wrote were obtaining the outcome of their faith the salvation of their souls they were aware of the supernatural working of God in their hearts and lives and they were persuaded that this was in a sense the down payment on the hope that would be finally fulfilled when Jesus returned and there is another thing that Peter wants to emphasize to these Christians it is the fact that they are incredibly privileged to have had the gospel preached to them

Peter points out to them how the Old Testament prophets predicted Jesus' sufferings and future glory they did so under the influence of the Holy Spirit but the fact is these prophets didn't have themselves a crystal clear understanding of how these things would turn out they were aware says Peter that much of their message would become clear only when it was fulfilled it was revealed to them Peter writes that they were serving not themselves but you the prophets understanding of the gospel was limited because Jesus had not yet come but those who can look back on the life death and resurrection of Jesus have an understanding of salvation that even the prophets prophets didn't have and what a privilege that is in fact Peter says that it's not just the prophets who were fascinated by this message that they didn't fully understand he says that the angels themselves long to look into the gospel the heavenly beings who serve God and do his bidding they are intrigued by all that the Lord

Jesus has done to save a lost humanity they know what it's like to live in the sinless environment of heaven and they marvel that God's son left the glory of heaven humbled himself to live as a human being in our sin-sake world and bore God's judgment on human sin why why would he do it why would the son of God love lost sinners and give himself for them the angels have no sin from which they need to be saved but we do and if they long to look into these things how much more should we who are privileged to look back at all that the Lord Jesus has done and who have an understanding of what God has accomplished in and through him

Peter wants his friends to see that despite their difficult experience their difficult experiences they are privileged to have the gospel preached to them these trials are temporary they're not random they're not purposeless God is using them for the good of his people it's part of the tension of living in the here and now just as it's difficult to trust in an unseen savior but the spirit's work in us is unmistakable it is a privilege to have the gospel preached to us

I wonder if that's how you and I see it today their identity their hope their experience finally and briefly their response how should the Christians Peter is writing to respond to what he has written he does want them to respond because he begins verse 13 with the word therefore therefore in the light of all that I have said this is what I want you to do let me highlight two things first Peter says in verse 13 set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus

[44 : 27] Christ the believers have been born again to a living hope they have an inheritance that is sure praise glory and honour awaits them well then says Peter set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you set your hope fully on all that the Lord has in store for you focus on the future live in the present in the light of the future earlier we saw how the athletes who competed in the Olympic Games spent long grueling hours over several years preparing for the Games what spurred them on to do that surely it was the hope of winning a gold medal and achieving fame and glory and in much the same way the hope of receiving salvation in all its fullness should be a powerful spur for living a disciplined

Christian life despite even the difficulties that may come our way the Olympic athletes had high hopes but they weren't guaranteed but as Christians we have a hope that is guaranteed that is why we need to focus on it set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ one thing that obviously concerned Peter was that the Christians to whom he was writing came from a variety of backgrounds most of them were probably Gentiles they probably had all kinds of religious background they had probably led a variety of lifestyles

Peter is concerned that they should pursue holiness he tells them how they should not be conformed to the passions of their former ignorance but as he who called you is holy you also be holy in all your conduct how then are they to pursue holiness that can be hard it can be difficult to resist sin it can be difficult to pursue holiness if we are to become the people the Lord wants us to be we can do so only by his grace and with a clear focus on the future we all need motivation well as Peter focus on the future set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus

Christ and the second thing Paul urges on his friends is in verse 17 conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile it isn't a paralyzing cringing terror that the apostle has in mind no it's a proper fear a fear of God's discipline a fear of his fatherly displeasure it's the reverence and awe that we owe to a holy God Peter gives two reasons in particular for this fear one is that God is our judge as well as our father he judges impartially according to each one's deeds even though believers will be acquitted in the final judgment our works it would seem will be judged and rewarded according we ought to give the Lord due reverence on that account and the second reason he gives for fearing the

Lord is the inestimable cost of our salvation you were ransomed he writes not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot our salvation costs nothing less than the life of the son of God and so we should take salvation seriously and seek to live it out in the light of its costliness we are accountable to God the father and we owe our salvation to God the son so what about our identity today do we if we are

[50 : 15] Christians do we take on board our identity are we remembering our hope and focusing on it are we putting our experience in the context of the future and do we respond by focusing on that future and treating the Lord with all and if we are not Christians the fact is that it is still our privilege to have the gospel preached to us the gospel offer is still available believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved he is a great savior and his promises are copper bottomed shall we pray