

I Peter 1:1-9
January 8, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: WHAT is salvation? [Salvation is the free gift of God, who offers it by grace, that frees us from the penalty of sin and allows us to live eternally with God in heaven when this chapter of life is over. God rescued us from the penalty of sin, which is death and eternal separation from God.]

Q: WHO needs salvation and WHY? [All of us because we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God]

Q: WHERE does salvation come from? [God through our Lord Jesus]

Q: WHEN did salvation occur for you? [Let class members express their understanding of “when” it happened for them. For me, when I professed my faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross for me to save me from the penalty of sin, which is death, and who was resurrected from the dead three days later.]

Clarify: Repentance must be followed by faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Repentance, of itself, is only the first step. (If you go no further, then repentance is like getting your “fire insurance policy from hell”) Your next step is to place your full faith and trust in Christ before your New Birth takes place. Luke 11:13 stresses the fact that it is “your heavenly Father” who gives “the Holy Spirit to them that ask.” One must be in the family of God before he can expect this Gift of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Gift of the Father, and only those who have been saved can call Him “Father.” “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6).

Transition: We are beginning a new study today, which is an epistle written by the apostle Peter during the last ten years of his life before he died a martyr death. Peter was one of the leading apostles in the early church, who was assigned to the Jews (Gal. 2:1–10). The Lord had commanded Peter to strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:32) and to tend the flock (John 21:15–17; also see 1 Peter 5:1–4). The writing of this letter was a part of that ministry. Peter told his readers that this was a letter of encouragement and personal witness regarding the *true grace of God, which is found in salvation!* (See 1 Peter 5:12 and refer to 5:10). We will see the theme of salvation throughout Peter’s letter.

Transition: As we study this letter, it is my hope that our GRATITUDE for salvation is always a 10 on a scale of 1-10! But more importantly, this letter should strengthen our understanding of salvation, *which is the true grace of God*, and HOW that translates on the day to day level through faith. That is the overarching impact that I hope this letter has on each of us. It won’t be difficult to follow Peter’s train of thought. Everything begins with salvation, our personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ. For today’s lesson, **I want to submit that we SHOULD**

more deeply appreciate our salvation FOR multiple REASONS Peter presents in today's passage. Let's start by reading the first two verses.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.1:

- Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

V.2:

- who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What is an apostle? [It refers to the Twelve whom Jesus chose to train for the task of carrying His message to the world. Following His resurrection, Jesus commissioned them for this task. These men had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry and were witnesses to His resurrection, and Peter was one of them.]

Q: Peter is writing to the "elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout..." which might throw some of us! Who is the "elect?" [If you will recall Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was the gift Jesus promised His followers. When the outpouring of the Spirit "bewildered" the Jews, Peter was front and center explaining the gospel to them and inviting them to accept salvation in Christ Jesus. So the "elect" were those who believed in Christ and then were scattered to start churches with the help of Paul throughout Asia Minor. X-Ref Acts 2:37-41]

Q: When you see phrases like "God the father," "the Spirit," and "Jesus Christ" all in one sentence, does that trigger a certain doctrine in your mind? [Hopefully the **Trinity!** One of the hardest doctrines of the Bible to grasp is the teaching that there is one true living God, but three co-equal personhoods within this Godhead. And each personhood, i.e. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, each have their roles.

Q: Let me re-visit the question I asked earlier: "When did salvation occur for you?" But this time, let's ask it from a heavenly vantage point and look at v.2 for clues:

- From the vantage point of "God the Father," when did salvation occur for you?

A: As far as God the Father is concerned, I was saved when He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world. This miracle all began with God: we were chosen by the Father (Eph. 1:3-4). This took place in the deep counsels of eternity, and we knew nothing about it until it was revealed to us in the Word of God. This election was not based on anything we had done, because we were not even on the scene. Nor was it based on anything God saw that we would be or do. God's election was based wholly on His grace and love. We cannot explain it (Rom. 11:33-36), but we can rejoice in it.

"Foreknowledge" does not suggest that God merely knew ahead of time that we would believe, and therefore He chose us. In the Bible, *to foreknow* means "to set one's love on a person or

persons in a personal way.” It is used this way in Amos 3:2: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” God set His electing love on the nation of Israel. Other verses that use “know” in this special sense are Psalm 1:6; Matthew 7:23; John 10:14, 27; and 1 Corinthians 8:3.

- From the vantage point of “Jesus Christ,” when did salvation occur for you?

A: **As far as the Son is concerned, I was saved when He died for me on the cross.** The plan of salvation includes more than the Father’s electing love (John 3:16 includes the “world”). The Son of God had to die on the cross for our sins, or there could be no salvation. Notice in v.2 the reference to “sprinkling His blood.” We were redeemed by the blood of the lamb. He laid down His life so that salvation would be made available to all.

- From the vantage point of “the Spirit,” when did salvation occur for you?

A: **As far as the Spirit is concerned, we were saved when we heard the Gospel and received Christ.** That’s when salvation came together, but it took all three Persons of the Godhead to bring us to salvation. The plan of salvation includes more than God’s love for His creation and the redemptive work on the cross by Jesus.

Thus, we are chosen by God, purchased by Christ, and set apart by the Spirit. I hope this fact alone helps us to move away from taking His gift of salvation for granted, but instead more deeply appreciate our salvation. **One REASON we should appreciate our salvation is because our Triune God went to significant lengths to make it available to all of us.**

Peter concludes his salutation with “Grace and peace be yours in abundance.” I love that!

Read I Peter 1:3-9

V.3:

- Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

V.4:

- and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,

V.5:

- who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

V.6:

- In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

V.7:

- These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

V.8:

- Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

V.9:

- for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.3-9: Let's get the bigger picture of this section of Scripture. What is Peter trying to do here? [Encourage these believers (both Jews and Gentile converts) who are scattered among the five northern Asia Minor Roman provinces (modern Turkey) because they are "suffering grief in all kinds of trials." At least fifteen times in this letter, Peter referred to suffering. He reminds them that they have this incredible gift of salvation, which he describes in detail in these verses.

Q v.3-4: What did Peter just describe to us? [Salvation – If you're looking for a quick definition of salvation, steal these two verses! It's a "mini gospel."]

Q v.3: Why did God give us the opportunity to have salvation? [Because of His great mercy!]

Q: What is the definition of mercy? [Not receiving the consequences you deserve]

Q: In His great mercy, He has given us "new birth" into a "living hope" through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Let's not skip the rock over the pond on this verse!

- First, **when** does new birth happen? [When we trust Christ as our Savior]
- **What** does Peter mean by "new birth?" [X-Ref: 2 Cor 5:17-18 (new creation); Rom 6:4 (now a new creation with a "new life;" John 3 – story of Nicodemus – Emphasize John 3:16-19 Jesus says "whosoever believes in Him" = human responsibility. It doesn't say "whosoever my Father chooses"…]

Observation V.3: Do you see the Triune God described in v.3? Peter gives praise to **God**, the Father of our Lord **Jesus Christ**, who gave us "new birth," which can only happen by the working of the **Holy Spirit**.

Q: What do you think Peter meant by a "living hope?" [Hope is "living" because it is grounded on the "living" Word of God (1 Peter 1:23), and was made possible by the "living" Son of God who arose from the dead. A "living hope" is one that has life in it and therefore can give life to us. Because it has life, it grows and becomes greater and more beautiful as time goes on.]

Q v.4: What is a result of our salvation? [An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept or preserved in heaven.]

Q v.5: How is our salvation protected? ["kept or shielded" by the power of God." The word translated "shielded" is a military word that means "guarded." The tense of the verb reveals that we are constantly being guarded by God, assuring us that we shall safely arrive in heaven. Believers are not kept by their own power, but by the power of God. Our faith in Christ has so united us to Him that His power now guards us and guides us. We are not kept by our strength, but by His faithfulness.]

Q: How long will He guard us? [Until Jesus Christ returns and we will share in the full revelation of His great salvation.]

Q: In case the phrase “until the coming of your salvation” confuses anyone, know that believers possess salvation now but will sense its full significance at the return of Christ **in the last time**. This final step, or ultimate completion of salvation is “the salvation of their souls” (1 Peter 1:9).

Transition: Now that Peter has introduced salvation as our foundation, he addresses the trials being faced by these believers scattered in northern Asia Minor. Most of us don’t happily embrace trials. But Peter will suggest in v.6-7 that we should “greatly rejoice” in them. In that process, he identifies several facts about trials. Let’s see if we can tag them.

Q v.6-7: What facts about trials do you see in these two verses?

- In the scheme of life, trials last “a little while.” (v.6)
- There are “all kinds of trials.” (v.6)
- Trials are not easy (v.7) – like gold going through the fire
- Trials “prove our genuine faith” in God (v.7)
- Trials “may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (v.7)

Q v.8-9: Peter gives an inspirational message to his readers who are facing trials of all kinds. He commends them for the things they are doing. What are they?

- They LOVE Christ, even though they have not seen Him.
- They TRUST (“believe”) Christ
- They REJOICE in Christ
- They RECEIVE in Christ their salvation, the goal of their faith.

This is a good word for us. When we face trials, we need to continue to love and trust Christ, rejoice in our trials (don’t let trials steal our inexpressible joy), and know that our faith is being proved genuine so that we receive the ultimate goal of our faith, which is the “salvation of our souls!

Q: Do you see REASONS why we should appreciate our salvation in these six verses?

- God’s salvation through Christ gave us a new birth into a living hope (v.3)
- God’s salvation gave us an inheritance that is incorruptible and shielded in heaven (v.4-5)
- Our souls need to be saved! (v.9)

LOOK:

Now that we’ve tagged REASONS why we should appreciate our salvation, I hope we spend time praising and thanking Him for it. It would be an insult to God’s grace if we took our salvation for granted. God made salvation available to us out of His “great mercy” to us. Everything begins with salvation, which allows us to have a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ. If we know Christ as Savior, then we have living hope! If we have “living hope,” we can overcome and God will transform suffering into glory. Salvation is our foundation. Without it, we would have no hope.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 388–394). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

WHERE THERE'S CHRIST, THERE'S HOPE

1 Peter 1:1; 5:12–14

“While there's life, there's hope!”

That ancient Roman saying is still quoted today and, like most adages, it has an element of truth but no guarantee of certainty. It is not the *fact* of life that determines hope, but the *faith* of life. A Christian believer has a “living hope” (1 Peter 1:3) because his faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:21). This “living hope” is the major theme of Peter's first letter. He is saying to all believers, “Be hopeful!”

Before we study the details of this fascinating letter, let's get acquainted with the man who wrote it, the people to whom he sent it, and the particular situation that prompted him to write.

The Writer (1 Peter 1:1)

He identified himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1). Some liberals have questioned whether a common fisherman could have penned this letter, especially since Peter and John were both called “unlearned and ignorant men” (Acts 4:13). However, this phrase only means “laymen without formal schooling”; that is, they were not professional religious leaders. We must never underestimate the training Peter had for three years with the Lord Jesus, nor should we minimize the work of the Holy Spirit in his life. Peter is a perfect illustration of the truth expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:26–31.

His given name was Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter, which means “a stone” (John 1:35–42). The Aramaic equivalent of “Peter” is “Cephas,” so Peter was a man with three names. Nearly fifty times in the New Testament, he is called “Simon”; and often he is called “Simon Peter.” Perhaps the two names suggest a Christian's two natures: an old nature (Simon) that is prone to fail, and a new nature (Peter) that can give victory. As Simon, he was only another human piece of clay; but Jesus Christ made a rock out of him!

Peter and Paul were the two leading apostles in the early church. Paul was assigned especially to minister to the Gentiles, and Peter to the Jews (Gal. 2:1–10). The Lord had commanded Peter to strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:32) and to tend the flock (John 21:15–17; also see 1 Peter 5:1–4), and the writing of this letter was a part of that ministry. Peter told his readers that this was a letter of encouragement and personal witness (1 Peter 5:12). Some writings are manufactured out of books, the way freshmen students write term papers; but this letter grew out of a life lived to the glory of God. A number of events in Peter's life are woven into the fabric of this epistle.

This letter is also associated with Silas (Silvanus, 1 Peter 5:12). He was one of the “chief men” in the early church (Acts 15:22) and a prophet (Acts 15:32). This means that he communicated God's messages to the congregations as he was directed by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 14). The Apostles and prophets worked together to lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20); and, once that foundation was laid, they passed off the scene. There are no apostles and prophets *in the New Testament sense* in the church today.

It is interesting that Silas was associated with Peter's ministry, because originally he went with Paul as a replacement for Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41). Peter also mentioned John Mark (1

Peter 5:13) whose failure on the mission field helped to cause the rupture between Paul and Barnabas. Peter had led Mark to faith in Christ (“Mark, my son”) and certainly would maintain a concern for him. No doubt one of the early assemblies met in John Mark’s home in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). In the end, Paul forgave and accepted Mark as a valued helper in the work (2 Tim. 4:11).

Peter indicated that he wrote this letter “at Babylon” (1 Peter 5:13) where there was an assembly of believers. There is no evidence either from church history or tradition that Peter ministered in ancient Babylon which, at that time, did have a large community of Jews. There was another town called “Babylon” in Egypt, but we have no proof that Peter ever visited it. “Babylon” is probably another name for the city of Rome, and we do have reason to believe that Peter ministered in Rome and was probably martyred there. Rome is called “Babylon” in Revelation 17:5 and 18:10. It was not unusual for persecuted believers during those days to write or speak in “code.”

In saying this, however, we must not assign more to Peter than is due him. He did *not* found the church in Rome nor serve as its first bishop. It was Paul’s policy not to minister where any other apostle had gone (Rom. 15:20); so Paul would not have ministered in Rome had Peter arrived there first. Peter probably arrived in Rome after Paul was released from his first imprisonment, about the year A.D. 62. First Peter was written about the year 63. Paul was martyred about 64, and perhaps that same year, or shortly after, Peter laid down his life for Christ.

The Recipients (1 Peter 1:1)

Peter called them “strangers” (1 Peter 1:1), which means “resident aliens, sojourners.” They are called “strangers and pilgrims” in 1 Peter 2:11. These people were citizens of heaven through faith in Christ (Phil. 3:20), and therefore were not permanent residents on earth. Like Abraham, they had their eyes of faith centered on the future city of God (Heb. 11:8–16). They were in the world, but not of the world (John 17:16).

Because Christians are “strangers” in the world, they are considered to be “strange” in the eyes of the world (1 Peter 4:4). Christians have standards and values different from those of the world, and this gives opportunity both for witness and for warfare. We will discover in this epistle that some of the readers were experiencing suffering because of their different lifestyle.

These believers were a “scattered” people as well as a “strange” people. The word translated “scattered” (*diaspora*) was a technical term for the Jews who lived outside of Palestine. It is used this way in John 7:35 and James 1:1. However, Peter’s use of this word does not imply that he was writing only to Jewish Christians, because some statements in his letter suggest that some of his readers were converted out of Gentile paganism (1 Peter 1:14, 18; 2:9–10; 4:1–4). There was undoubtedly a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles in the churches that received this letter. We will notice a number of Old Testament references and allusions in these chapters.

These Christians were scattered in five different parts of the Roman Empire, all of them in northern Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The Holy Spirit did not permit Paul to minister in Bithynia (Acts 16:7), so he did not begin this work. There were Jews at Pentecost from Pontus and Cappadocia (Acts 2:9), and perhaps they carried the Gospel to their neighboring province. Possibly Jewish believers who had been under Peter’s ministry in other places had migrated to towns in these provinces. People were “on the move” in those days, and dedicated believers shared the Word wherever they went (Acts 8:4).

The important thing for us to know about these “scattered strangers” is that they were going through a time of suffering and persecution. At least fifteen times in this letter, Peter referred to suffering; and he used eight different Greek words to do so. Some of these Christians were suffering because they were living godly lives and doing what was good and right (1 Peter 2:19–23; 3:14–18; 4:1–4, 15–19). Others were suffering reproach for the name of Christ (1 Peter 4:14) and being railed at by unsaved people (1 Peter 3:9–10). Peter wrote to encourage them to be good witnesses to their persecutors, and to remember that their suffering would lead to glory (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:13–14; 5:10).

But Peter had another purpose in mind. He knew that a “fiery trial” was about to begin—official persecution from the Roman Empire (1 Peter 4:12). When the church began in Jerusalem, it was looked on as a “sect” of the traditional Jewish faith. The first Christians were Jews, and they met in the temple precincts. The Roman government took no official action against the Christians since the Jewish religion was accepted and approved. But when it became clear that Christianity was not a “sect” of Judaism, Rome had to take official steps.

Several events occurred that helped to precipitate this “fiery trial.” To begin with, Paul had defended the Christian faith before the official court in Rome (Phil. 1:12–24). He had been released but then was arrested again. This second defense failed, and he was martyred (2 Tim. 4:16–18). Second, the deranged Emperor, Nero, blamed the fire of Rome (July A.D. 64) on the Christians, using them as a scapegoat. Peter was probably in Rome about that time and was slain by Nero, who had also killed Paul. Nero’s persecution of Christians was local at first, but it probably spread. At any rate, Peter wanted to prepare the churches.

We must not get the idea that all Christians in every part of the Empire were going through the same trials to the same degree at the same time. It varied from place to place, though suffering and opposition were pretty general (1 Peter 5:9). Nero introduced official persecution of the church and other emperors followed his example in later years. Peter’s letter must have been a tremendous help to Christians who suffered during the reigns of Trajan (98–117), Hadrian (117–138), and Diocletian (284–305). Christians in the world today may yet learn the value of Peter’s letter when their own “fiery trials” of persecution begin. While I personally believe that the church will not go through *the* Tribulation, I do believe that these latter days will bring much suffering and persecution to the people of God.

It is possible that Silas was the bearer of this letter to the believers in the provinces, and also the secretary who wrote the epistle.

The Message (1 Peter 5:12)

First Peter is a letter of encouragement (1 Peter 5:12). We have noted that the theme of *suffering* runs throughout the letter, but so also does the theme of *glory* (see 1 Peter 1:7–8, 11, 21; 2:12; 4:11–16; 5:1, 4, 10–11). One of the encouragements that Peter gives suffering saints is the assurance that their suffering will one day be transformed into glory (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:13–14; 5:10). This is possible only because the Saviour suffered for us and then entered into His glory (1 Peter 1:11; 5:1). The sufferings of Christ are mentioned often in this letter (1 Peter 1:11; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1).

Peter is preeminently the apostle of *hope*, as Paul is the apostle of *faith* and John of *love*. As believers, we have a “living hope” because we trust a living Christ (1 Peter 1:3). This hope enables us to keep our minds under control and “hope to the end” (1 Peter 1:13) when Jesus shall return. We must not be ashamed of our hope but be ready to explain and defend it (1 Peter 3:15). Like Sarah, Christian wives can hope in God (1 Peter 3:5, where “trusted” should be translated

“hoped”). Since suffering brings glory, and because Jesus is coming again, we can indeed be hopeful!

But suffering does not *automatically* bring glory to God and blessing to God’s people. Some believers have fainted and fallen in times of trial and have brought shame to the name of Christ. It is only when we depend on the grace of God that we can glorify God in times of suffering. Peter also emphasized God’s grace in this letter. “I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it” (1 Peter 5:12).

The word “grace” is used in every chapter of 1 Peter: 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19 (“thankworthy”), 20 (“acceptable”); 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12. Grace is God’s generous favor to undeserving sinners and needy saints. When we depend on God’s grace, we can endure suffering and turn trials into triumphs. It is grace alone that saves us (Eph. 2:8–10). God’s grace can give us strength in times of trial (2 Cor. 12:1–10). Grace enables us to serve God in spite of difficulties (1 Cor. 15:9–10). Whatever begins with God’s grace will always lead to glory (Ps. 84:11; 1 Peter 5:10).

As we study 1 Peter, we will see how the three themes of suffering, grace, and glory unite to form an encouraging message for believers experiencing times of trial and persecution. These themes are summarized in 1 Peter 5:10, a verse we would do well to memorize.

The cynical editor and writer H.L. Mencken once defined hope as “a pathological belief in the occurrence of the impossible.” But that definition does not agree with the New Testament meaning of the word. True Christian hope is more than “hope so.” It is confident assurance of future glory and blessing.

An Old Testament believer called God “the Hope of Israel” (Jer. 14:8). A New Testament believer affirms that Jesus Christ is his hope (1 Tim. 1:1; see Col. 1:27). The unsaved sinner is “without hope” (Eph. 2:12); and if he dies without Christ, he will be hopeless forever. The Italian poet, Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, put this inscription over the world of the dead: “Abandon all hope, you who enter here!”

This confident hope gives us the encouragement and enablement we need for daily living. It does not put us in a rocking chair where we complacently await the return of Jesus Christ. Instead, it puts us in the marketplace, on the battlefield, where we keep on going when the burdens are heavy and the battles are hard. Hope is not a sedative; it is a shot of adrenaline, a blood transfusion. Like an anchor, our hope in Christ stabilizes us in the storms of life (Heb. 6:18–19); but unlike an anchor, our hope moves us forward, it does not hold us back.

It is not difficult to follow Peter’s train of thought. Everything begins with salvation, our personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ. If we know Christ as Saviour, then we have hope! If we have hope, then we can walk in holiness and in harmony. There should be no problem submitting to those around us in society, the home, and the church family. Salvation and submission are preparation for suffering; but if we focus on Christ, we can overcome and God will transform suffering into glory.

IT’S GLORY ALL THE WAY!

1 Peter 1:2–12

Christians Are Born for Glory (1 Peter 1:2–4)

Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, believers have been “begotten again” to a living hope, and that hope includes the glory of God. But, what do we mean by “the glory of God”?

The glory of God means the sum total of all that God is and does. “Glory” is not a separate attribute or characteristic of God, such as His holiness, wisdom, or mercy. Everything that God is and does is characterized by glory. He is glorious in wisdom and power, so that everything He thinks and does is marked by glory. He reveals His glory in creation (Ps. 19), in His dealings with the people of Israel, and especially in His plan of salvation for lost sinners.

When we were born the first time, we were not born for glory. “For all flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass” (1 Peter 1:24, quoted from Isa. 40:6). Whatever feeble glory man has will eventually fade and disappear; but the glory of the Lord is eternal. The works of man done for the glory of God will last and be rewarded (1 John 2:17). But the selfish human achievements of sinners will one day vanish to be seen no more. One reason that we have encyclopedias is so that we can learn about the famous people who are now forgotten!

Peter gave two descriptions to help us better understand this wonderful truth about glory.

A Christian’s birth described (vv. 2–3). This miracle all began with God: we were chosen by the Father (Eph. 1:3–4). This took place in the deep counsels of eternity, and we knew nothing about it until it was revealed to us in the Word of God. This election was not based on anything we had done, because we were not even on the scene. Nor was it based on anything God saw that we would be or do. God’s election was based wholly on His grace and love. We cannot explain it (Rom. 11:33–36), but we can rejoice in it.

“Foreknowledge” does not suggest that God merely knew ahead of time that we would believe, and therefore He chose us. This would raise the question, “Who or what made us decide for Christ?” and would take our salvation completely out of God’s hands. In the Bible, *to foreknow* means “to set one’s love on a person or persons in a personal way.” It is used this way in Amos 3:2: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” God set His electing love on the nation of Israel. Other verses that use “know” in this special sense are Psalm 1:6; Matthew 7:23; John 10:14, 27; and 1 Corinthians 8:3. But the plan of salvation includes more than the Father’s electing love; it also includes the work of the Spirit in convicting the sinner and bringing him to faith in Christ. The best commentary on this is 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14. Also, the Son of God had to die on the cross for our sins, or there could be no salvation.

We have been chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son, and set apart by the Spirit. It takes all three if there is to be a true experience of salvation.

As far as God the Father is concerned, I was saved when He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world. As far as the Son is concerned, I was saved when He died for me on the cross. But as far as the Spirit is concerned, I was saved one night in May 1945 when I heard the Gospel and received Christ. Then it all came together, but it took all three Persons of the Godhead to bring me to salvation. If we separate these ministries, we will either deny divine sovereignty or human responsibility; and that would lead to heresy.

Peter does not deny man’s part in God’s plan to save sinners. In 1 Peter 1:23 he emphasizes the fact that the Gospel was preached to these people, and that they heard it and believed (see also 1 Peter 1:12). Peter’s own example at Pentecost is proof that we do not “leave it all with God” and never urge lost sinners to come to Christ (Acts 2:37–40). The same God who ordains the end—our salvation—also ordains *the means to the end*—the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God.

A Christian’s hope described (vv. 3–4). To begin with, it is *a living hope* because it is grounded on the living Word of God (1 Peter 1:23), and was made possible by the living Son of God who arose from the dead. A “living hope” is one that has life in it and therefore can give life to us. Because it has life, it grows and becomes greater and more beautiful as time goes on. Time

destroys most hopes; they fade and then die. But the passing of time only makes a Christian's hope that much more glorious.

Peter called this hope *an inheritance* (1 Peter 1:4). As the children of the King, we share His inheritance in glory (Rom. 8:17–18; Eph. 1:9–12). We are included in Christ's last will and testament, and we share the glory with Him (John 17:22–24).

Note the description of this inheritance, for it is totally unlike any earthly inheritance. For one thing, it is *incorruptible*, which means that nothing can ruin it. Because it is *undefiled*, it cannot be stained or cheapened in any way. It will never grow old because it is eternal; it cannot wear out, nor can it disappoint us in any way.

In 1 Peter 1:5 and 9, this inheritance is called “salvation.” The believer is already saved through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8–9), but the completion of that salvation awaits the return of the Saviour. Then we shall have new bodies and enter into a new environment, the heavenly city. In 1 Peter 1:7, Peter called this hope “the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Paul called this “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13).

What a thrilling thing it is to know that we were born for glory! When we were born again, we exchanged the passing glory of man for the eternal glory of God!

Christians Are Kept for Glory (1 Peter 1:5)

Not only is the glory being “reserved” for us, but we are being kept for the glory! In my travels, I have sometimes gone to a hotel or motel, only to discover that the reservations have been confused or cancelled. This will not happen to us when we arrive in heaven, for our future home and inheritance are guaranteed and reserved.

“But suppose *we* don't make it?” a timid saint might ask. But we will; for all believers are being “kept by the power of God.” The word translated “kept” is a military word that means “guarded, shielded.” The tense of the verb reveals that we are *constantly* being guarded by God, assuring us that we shall safely arrive in heaven. This same word is used to describe the soldiers guarding Damascus when Paul made his escape (2 Cor. 11:32). See also Jude 24–25 and Romans 8:28–39.

Believers are not kept by their own power, but by the power of God. Our faith in Christ has so united us to Him that His power now guards us and guides us. We are not kept by our strength, but by His faithfulness. How long will He guard us? Until Jesus Christ returns and we will share in the full revelation of His great salvation. This same truth is repeated in 1 Peter 1:9.

It is encouraging to know that we are “guarded for glory.” According to Romans 8:30, we have *already* been glorified. All that awaits is the public revelation of this glory (Rom. 8:18–23). If any believer were lost, it would rob God of His glory. God is so certain that we will be in heaven that He has already given us His glory as the assurance (John 17:24; Eph. 1:13–14).

The assurance of heaven is a great help to us today. As Dr. James M. Gray expressed it in one of his songs, “Who can mind the journey, when the road leads home?” If suffering today means glory tomorrow, then suffering becomes a blessing to us. The unsaved have their “glory” now, but it will be followed by eternal suffering *away from the glory of God* (2 Thes. 1:3–10). In the light of this, ponder 2 Corinthians 4:7–18—and rejoice!

Christians Are Being Prepared for Glory (1 Peter 1:6–7)

We must keep in mind that all God plans and performs here is preparation for what He has in store for us in heaven. He is preparing us for the life and service yet to come. Nobody yet knows

all that is in store for us in heaven; but this we do know: life today is a school in which God trains us for our future ministry in eternity. This explains the presence of trials in our lives: they are some of God's tools and textbooks in the school of Christian experience.

Peter used the word "trials" rather than "tribulations" or "persecutions," because he was dealing with the *general* problems that Christians face as they are surrounded by unbelievers. He shared several facts about trials.

Trials meet needs. The phrase "if need be" indicates that there are special times when God knows that we need to go through trials. Sometimes trials discipline us when we have disobeyed God's will (Ps. 119:67). At other times, trials prepare us for spiritual growth, or even help to prevent us from sinning (2 Cor. 12:1–9). We do not always know the need being met, but we can trust God to know and to do what is best.

Trials are varied. Peter used the word "manifold," which literally means "variegated, many-colored." He used the same word to describe God's grace in 1 Peter 4:10. No matter what "color" our day may be—a "blue" Monday or a "gray" Tuesday—God has grace sufficient to meet the need. We must not think that because we have overcome one kind of trial that we will automatically "win them all." Trials are varied, and God matches the trial to our strengths and needs.

Trials are not easy. Peter did not suggest that we take a careless attitude toward trials, because this would be deceitful. Trials produce what he called "heaviness." The word means "to experience grief or pain." It is used to describe our Lord in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37), and the sorrow of saints at the death of loved ones (1 Thes. 4:13). To deny that our trials are painful is to make them even worse. Christians must accept the fact that there are difficult experiences in life and not put on a brave front just to appear "more spiritual."

Trials are controlled by God. They do not last forever; they are "for a season." When God permits His children to go through the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. If we rebel, He may have to reset the clock; but if we submit, He will not permit us to suffer one minute too long. The important thing is that we learn the lesson He wants to teach us and that we bring glory to Him alone.

Peter illustrated this truth by referring to the goldsmith. No goldsmith would deliberately waste the precious ore. He would put it into the smelting furnace long enough to remove the cheap impurities; then he would pour it out and make from it a beautiful article of value. It has been said that the Eastern goldsmith kept the metal in the furnace until he could see his face reflected in it. So our Lord keeps us in the furnace of suffering until we reflect the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ.

The important point is that this glory is not fully revealed until Jesus returns for His church. Our trying experiences today are preparing us for glory tomorrow. When we see Jesus Christ, we will bring "praise and honor and glory" to Him if we have been faithful in the sufferings of this life (see Rom. 8:17–18). This explains why Peter associated *rejoicing* with *suffering*. While we may not be able to rejoice as we look *around* in our trials, we can rejoice as we look *ahead*. The word "this" in 1 Peter 1:6 refers back to the "salvation" (the return of Christ) mentioned in 1 Peter 1:5.

Just as the assayer tests the gold to see if it is pure gold or counterfeit, so the trials of life test our faith to prove its sincerity. A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted! Too many professing Christians have a "false faith" and this will be revealed in the trials of life. The seed that fell on shallow soil produced rootless plants, and the plants died when the sun came up (see Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23). The sun in the parable represents "tribulation or persecution." The person

who abandons “his faith” when the going gets tough is only proving that he really had no faith at all.

The patriarch Job went through many painful trials, all of them with God’s approval; and yet he understood somewhat of this truth about the refiner’s fire. “But He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). And he did!

It is encouraging to know that we are born for glory, kept for glory, and being prepared for glory. But the fourth discovery Peter shared with his readers is perhaps the most exciting of all.

Christians Can Enjoy the Glory Now (1 Peter 1:8–12)

The Christian philosophy of life is not “pie in the sky by and by.” It carries with it a *present* dynamic that can turn suffering into glory *today*. Peter gave four directions for enjoying the glory now, even in the midst of trials.

Love Christ (v. 8). Our love for Christ is not based on physical sight, because we have not seen Him. It is based on our spiritual relationship with Him and what the Word has taught us about Him. The Holy Spirit has poured out God’s love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5), and we return that love to Him. When you find yourself in some trial, and you hurt, immediately lift your heart to Christ in true love and worship. Why? Because this will take the poison out of the experience and replace it with healing medicine.

Satan wants to use life’s trials to bring out the worst in us, but God wants to bring out the best in us. If we love ourselves more than we love Christ, then we will not experience any of the glory *now*. The fire will *burn* us, not *purify* us.

Trust Christ (v. 8). We must live by faith and not by sight. An elderly lady fell and broke her leg while attending a summer Bible conference. She said to the pastor who visited her, “I know the Lord led me to the conference. But I don’t see why this had to happen! And I don’t see any good coming from it.” Wisely, the pastor replied, “Romans 8:28 doesn’t say that we *see* all things working together for good. It says that we *know* it.”

Faith means surrendering all to God and obeying His Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. Love and faith go together: when you love someone, you trust him. And faith and love together help to strengthen hope; for where you find faith and love, you will find confidence for the future.

How can we grow in faith during times of testing and suffering? The same way we grow in faith when things seem to be going well: by feeding on the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Our fellowship with Christ through His Word not only strengthens our faith, but it also deepens our love. It is a basic principle of Christian living that we spend much time in the Word when God is testing us and Satan is tempting us.

Rejoice in Christ (v. 8). You may not be able to rejoice *over* the circumstances, but you can rejoice *in* them by centering your heart and mind on Jesus Christ. Each experience of trial helps us learn something new and wonderful about our Saviour. Abraham discovered new truths about the Lord on the mount where he offered his son (Gen. 22). The three Hebrew children discovered His nearness when they went through the fiery furnace (Dan. 3). Paul learned the sufficiency of His grace when he suffered with a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12).

Note that the joy He produces is “unspeakable and full of glory.” This joy is so deep and so wonderful that we cannot even express it. Words fail us! Peter had seen some of the glory on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus discussed with Moses and Elijah His own impending suffering and death (Luke 9:28–36).

Receive from Christ (vv. 9). “Believing ... receiving” is God’s way of meeting our needs. If we love Him, trust Him, and rejoice in Him, then we can receive from Him all that we need to turn trials into triumphs. First Peter 1:9 can be translated, “For you are receiving the consummation of your faith, that is, the final salvation of your souls.” In other words, we can experience *today* some of that future glory. Charles Spurgeon used to say, “Little faith will take your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.” It is not enough that we long for heaven during times of suffering, for anybody can do that. What Peter urged his readers to do was exercise love, faith, and rejoicing, so that they might experience some of the glory of heaven in the midst of suffering *now*.

Raymer, R. M. (1985). I Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 839-842). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

I. Customary Salutation (1:1–2)

The introductory greeting is the common form of salutation used in first-century correspondence. Paul’s letters usually began in the same manner, identifying both the author and those to whom the letters were addressed.

A. Identification of the author (1:1a).

1:1a. **Peter** is the Greek translation of the Aramaic Cephas, the name Jesus gave Simon when he was called to be a disciple (John 1:42). Nobody else in the New Testament could be identified as Peter, **an apostle of Jesus Christ**. This bold statement of apostolic authority is supported both by internal evidence in the text and by its early and universal acceptance as a part of the canon of Scripture.

B. Identification of those addressed (1:1b–2).

1:1b–2. Peter immediately, using a careful choice of words, began to comfort and encourage his readers. Christians are **God’s elect** not by chance or human design but by God’s sovereign, unconditional choice. Once only the nation of Israel could claim this title.

It is not surprising that those who have been **chosen** by God are seen as **strangers in the world** (from the one word *parepidēmois*, that emphasizes both foreign nationality and temporary residence; cf. 2:11). Christians, whose citizenship is in heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20), live in the midst of a pagan society as aliens and sojourners, displaced persons whose thoughts should often turn toward their true home.

The readers were **scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia**, sprinkled like salt throughout five of Asia Minor’s Roman provinces. The letter was evidently meant to circulate among the churches in this area. “Scattered” (*diasporas*) had special meaning to the Jewish Christians in these churches. The diaspora referred to Jews who were separated from their homeland. Peter adapted this word which previously described Israel to emphasize the condition of the early church.

Peter elaborated on the descriptive term “God’s elect” (cf. 2:9) **who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God**. God’s choice is part of His predetermined plan, and is

not based on any merit in those who are elected, but solely on His grace and love for them before their creation.

As the Williams translation puts it, God's choosing is "in accordance with" (*kata*) or in keeping with His foreknowledge. This seems preferable to the view that election follows or is based on foreknowledge. Moreover the word for foreknowledge (*prognōsin*) means more than a passive foresight; it contains the idea of "having regard for" or "centering one's attention on" (cf. Kenneth S. Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, p. 15). The same word is used in 1:20 of Christ who was "chosen" by the Father before Creation. The Father did more than merely know about His Son ahead of time; He knew Him completely. Thus God chose all those on whom He focused His attention (by His grace, not because of their merit).

The sanctifying work of the Spirit has set these chosen ones apart for service, putting God's choice and purpose into effect. The result of the Spirit's work is **obedience ... and sprinkling by His blood**. "Obedience" (*hypakoēn*, from *hypakouō*, "to hear under, to hearken") is man's responsibility to be submissive to God's Word (cf. Ex. 24:7; Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26). One living in obedience is constantly being cleansed with Christ's blood and is thus "set apart" from the world (cf. 1 John 1:7, 9). The blood sprinkling is redolent of the Old Testament priestly work at the tabernacle (Lev. 7:14; 14:7, 16, 51; 16:14–15; cf. Heb. 9:13; 12:24), which required obedience on the part of the offerers. However, the only time *people* were sprinkled with blood was at the inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 24:8).

In these words (1 Peter 1:2) Peter laid the theological foundations for this letter of encouragement. "God" **the Father** in His grace had chosen them and God the "Spirit" had sanctified them through the atoning blood of God the Son, **Jesus Christ**. (All three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned in this verse.) Thus Peter greeted his readers with the prayerful wish that they might experience **in abundance** God's **grace** (*charis*) **and peace** (*eirēnē*, equivalent of the Heb. *šālôm*; cf. 5:14). The words (lit.) "Grace to you and peace be multiplied" are also used in 2 Peter 1:2. God's grace was dear to Peter, for he referred to it 10 times in this epistle (1 Peter 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19–20 ("commendable" in these two verses); 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12).

II. Chosen for New Birth (1:3–2:10)

Peter continued to present the theological basis for encouragement in persecution. The stress throughout this section is on God's grace toward believers, evidenced by His sovereign call to salvation and its results in a believer's life. In the midst of trials one's new birth is the source of a living hope and a lifestyle of holiness.

A. *The new birth's living hope* (1:3–12)

In a doxology of praise to God, Peter encouraged his readers by reminding them that the new birth gave them a living hope in an imperishable future inheritance. The inheritance is sure because believers are shielded by the power of God till it is ready to be revealed. Consequently Christians may rejoice even when they face trials, since trials will prove their faith genuine and thus bring greater glory to Christ. Finally the new birth's hope is based not only on a future inheritance and present blessings but also on the written Word of God.

1. THE FUTURE INHERITANCE (1:3–5)

1:3. The contemplation of God's grace caused Peter to praise God, the Author of salvation and the Source of hope. The words **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** are identical in 2 Corinthians 1:3. The phrase **in His great mercy** refers to God's unmerited favor toward sinners in their hopeless condition. **He has given us new birth**; people can do nothing to merit such a gift. The words "has given ... new birth" translate *anagennēsas*, from the verb "beget again" or "cause to be born again." It is used only twice in the New Testament, both times in this chapter (1 Peter 1:3, 23). Peter may have been recalling Jesus' interview with Nicodemus (John 3:1–21). The "new birth" results in **a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. The "living hope" is based on the living resurrected Christ (cf. 1 Peter 1:21). The Christian's assurance in Christ is as certain and sure as the fact that Christ is alive! Peter used the word "living" six times (1:3, 23; 2:4–5; 4:5–6). Here "living" means that the believer's hope is sure, certain, and real, as opposed to the deceptive, empty, false hope the world offers.

1:4. The sure hope is of a future **inheritance** (*klēronomian*). This same word is used in the Septuagint to refer to Israel's promised possession of the land (cf. Num. 26:54, 56; 34:2; Josh. 11:23); it was her possession, granted to her as a gift from God. A Christian's inheritance cannot be destroyed by hostile forces, and it will not spoil like overripened fruit or fade in color. Peter used three words, each beginning with the same letter and ending with the same syllable, to describe in a cumulative fashion this inheritance's permanence: **can never perish** (*aphtharton*), **spoil** (*amianton*), **or fade** (*amaranton*). This inheritance is as indestructible as God's Word (cf. 1 Peter 1:23, where Peter again used *aphtharton*). Each Christian's inheritance of eternal life is **kept in heaven** or "kept watch on" by God so its ultimate possession is secure (cf. Gal. 5:5).

1:5. Not only is the inheritance guarded, but heirs who have been born into that inheritance **are shielded by God's power**. "Shielded" (*phrouroumenous*) is a military term, used to refer to a garrison within a city (Phil. 4:7 uses the same Gr. word). What greater hope could be given to those undergoing persecution than the knowledge that God's power guards them from within, to preserve them for an inheritance of salvation that will be completely **revealed** to them in God's presence. Believers possess salvation now but will sense its full significance at the return of Christ **in the last time**. This final step, or ultimate completion of "the salvation of their souls" (1 Peter 1:9), will come "when Jesus Christ is revealed," a clause Peter used twice (vv. 7, 13).

2. THE PRESENT JOY (1:6–9)

1:6. A living hope results in a present joy. **In this** likely refers to the truths mentioned in verses 3–5. Peter encouraged his readers to put their knowledge into practice. Their response to the tremendous theological truths taught so far should be that they would **greatly rejoice**. Knowledge alone cannot produce the great joy of experiential security and freedom from fear in the face of persecution. God's omnipotent sovereignty needs to be coupled with human responsibility. Christians are responsible to respond in faith. Faith turns sound doctrine into sound practice. Faith acts on the content of theology and produces conduct that corresponds to that content. Faith makes theological security experiential. The Apostle John wrote, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). This kind of faith or living hope can enable believers to rejoice even when they are called on **to suffer grief in all kinds of trials**.

Peter stressed that a Christian's joy is independent of his circumstances. James used the same two Greek words (*poikilois peirasmois*, "all kinds of trials"). The trials themselves are seen as

occasions for joy (James 1:2). Though trials may cause temporary grief, they cannot diminish that deep, abiding joy which is rooted in one's living hope in Christ Jesus.

1:7. These various trials—which seem to refer to persecution rather than life's normal problems—have two results: (a) they refine or purify one's faith—much as **gold is refined by fire** when its dross is removed, and (b) trials prove the reality of one's **faith**. Stress deepens and strengthens a Christian's faith and lets its reality be displayed. The word *dokimazomenou*, rendered **proved genuine**, means “to test for the purpose of approving” (cf. *dokimion*, “testing,” in v. 7 [“the trial of your faith,”] and James 1:3, and *dokimon*, “test,” in James 1:12).

In addition to *comparing* faith to gold, Peter *contrasted* purified faith with purified gold. Faith is more precious, **of greater worth, than gold**. Even refined gold, though it lasts a long time, eventually perishes (cf. 1 Peter 1:18; cf. James 5:3). It will be valueless in the marketplace of eternity. But faith “purchases” an inheritance that can never perish.

Genuine faith is not only of ultimate value to its possessor, but it will also bring **praise, glory, and honor** to the One whose name Christians bear, when He will return (**is revealed**; cf. 5:1) to claim them as His own. “Is revealed” translates *apokalypsei*, from which comes “apocalypse” (cf. 1:5, 12, and comments on v. 13).

1:8. Here is the climax of the experiential joy that results from faith. God accomplished salvation through the work of His Son Jesus Christ. So the focus of a believer's faith is not on abstract knowledge but on the person of Christ. The apostle's warm heart overflowed as he spoke of the love and belief in Christ of those who, unlike himself, did not see Jesus when He walked on earth. Peter may have had in mind Jesus' words: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Yet, though Christians **do not** now **see Him**, like Peter they love and **believe in Him**, and are also **filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy**. The verb *agalliaσthe* (“are filled with ... joy”) was used by Peter in 1 Peter 1:6, “you greatly rejoice,” and *agalliōmenoi* is used in 4:13.

1:9. Believers can rejoice because they **are receiving** (*komizomenoi*, “to receive as a reward”) what was promised, namely **salvation**, the **goal** or culmination (*telos*, “end”) **of ... faith**. For those who love and believe in Jesus Christ, salvation is past (“He has given us new birth,” v. 3), present (“through faith are shielded by God's power,” v. 5), and future (it is their “inheritance,” v. 4, which will “be revealed in the last time,” v. 5, and is “the goal of your faith,” v. 9). Since each day brings believers closer to that final day, they are now “receiving” it. All of this—in spite of persecution which deepens and demonstrates one's faith—is certainly cause for “inexpressible and glorious joy”! (v. 8)