

Greetings and Encouragement (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Sunday School - Sleater Kinney Road Baptist Church

04/02/16, 04/09/16

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1. TEXT:¹

- "Peter, [an] apostle of Jesus Christ - to [the] chosen who are resident foreigners; that is, [the] diaspora in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, [chosen] according to God the Father's plan, by the Spirit's sanctification, for the purpose of obedience, as well as sprinkling with Jesus Christ's blood. May grace and peace be always increasing to you!"

2. QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION:

- This passage sums up the main point of Peter's entire letter:
 - **Read 1 Pet 4:12-19**

¹ This is my own translation. The detailed translation notes are [here](#).

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- You can't read the letter without coming away with that idea
- Everything else Peter writes about in this letter is written to support that main point:²
 - (1) He writes about *growth* and *holiness*:
 - Be serious about your faith; the Lord chose to save you, and He's holy, so you must be holy, too!
 - The end of all things is at hand!
 - Show true love to your Christian brothers and sisters
 - Use your talents and abilities for the Lord; it's why He gave them to you!
 - **Read 1 Pet 4:7-11**
 - (2) He writes about *practical, everyday life*:
 - How should husbands treat their wives?
 - Wives their husbands?
 - Slaves their masters?
 - What about your testimony to unbelievers?
 - What about your attitude to government officials?
 - How should you live as you suffer for your faith?
 - **Read 1 Pet 4:1-6**
 - (3) He writes about church as a community of believers whose job it is to declare God's grace in salvation to unbelievers (cf. 1 Pet 1:9-10):
 - Christians are individual building blocks who, *together*, make up a spiritual house
 - We're priests for God, and our job is to offer *spiritual sacrifices* which are acceptable to God
 - Together, we're part of a holy nation of people, not united by race, blood, ethnicity or manmade borders, but by our spiritual bond as adopted sons and daughters of God
 - **Read 2 Pet 2:9-10** (cf. Rev 5:9-10)
- But, as you read about all these things throughout this letter, remember that **it all** ties back to the idea of trusting God while you suffer as a Christian
 - Remember that as we start going through this passage (1 Pet 1:1-2)

² See especially [my introduction to 1 Peter](#).

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a. What is the overall point of 1 Peter 1:1-9?

- **Read 1 Pet 1:1-9**
- This is the point:
 - (1) God loves you and has saved you
 - (2) So, rejoice as you suffer various trials
 - The Trinity in salvation (vv.1-2)
 - Christians are:
 - (1) chosen in accordance with the Father's plan
 - (2) by the Spirit's sanctification
 - (3) for obedience and sprinkling with Christ's blood
 - God's great mercy (vv.3-5):
 - Therefore, praise God for what He has done!
 - Because of His great mercy, Christians have been born again to have a living hope - guarded by God until Christ returns
 - All this is the reason *why* you can continue on in very difficult times:
 - **Read 1 Pet 1:6-9**

b. In vv.1-2, Peter discusses something specific *each* Person of the Trinity does when God saves somebody. Why do you think Peter spends so much time emphasizing God's grace in salvation? Is he trying to teach systematic doctrine, or does he have another point?

- Peter isn't trying to teach the Trinity; he just assumes it as he writes the opening words of the letter
- It's interesting that Peter doesn't feel he has to teach these Christians about the Trinity:

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- We worship one being who is God, and within God three co-equal and co-eternal Persons have always existed - Father, Son and Spirit³
 - (1) There is only one God
 - (2) God consists of three distinct Persons, each with different roles and responsibilities
 - (3) Each Person has always existed
 - (4) Each Person is fully divine (e.g. not $\frac{1}{3}$ divine)
 - (5) Each Person is one with the others
- Knowing this is the truth about God, put yourself in a Christian's shoes who heard this letter read, somewhere in Northern Turkey, on the shores of the Black Sea in the early 60s A.D.:⁴
 - (1) You've a Gentile, and you've grown up as a pagan
 - (2) You've offered sacrifices to pagan idols at your temples, and worshipped many gods your entire life
 - (3) Before you became a Christian, the Roman officials began encouraging people to offer incense to an image of the Roman Emperor
 - (4) You've become a Christian, and joined a small group of disciples,
 - Most of the people are former Jews, whose parents first became Christians after making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost about 33 years before
 - (5) You've stopped worshipping the gods, you don't go to the pagan temples, you don't offer incense to the gods, and you refuse to worship and reverence the Emperor's image
 - (6) Your family has disowned you, and kicked you out on the street
 - (7) Your *entire community* has disowned you, maybe they've even driven you from your hometown with threats of death
 - (8) You have no friends, family, or social support structure - all you have is your brothers and sisters in Christ, who help provide for you as best they can

³ See especially James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1998), 23ff.

⁴ For the brief background I offer on this "pretend" Christian's pagan life, I relied on Pliny the Younger's letter to Emperor Trajan (ca. 112 A.D.). Pliny was the governor of Bithynia at that time.

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- How tempting would it be to try and *mold* your pagan beliefs back with your Christian beliefs?
- How easy would it be to try and rationalize this kind of move?
 - You live in a syncretic culture - your friends and family would *love* if you'd just add Jesus to your list of pagan gods!
- You'd need some pretty good reasons to stick it out and remain a faithful Christians in this kind of environment - so Peter gives you some:
 - (1) God has chosen you for salvation
 - (2) You're resident foreigners, and part of a group of pilgrims who live in a very unholy land
 - (3) You're not alone - there are others *just like you* scattered all throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia!
 - (4) You, and every single other Christian, were each chosen according to God the Father's plan
 - This means you're important (not in and of yourself), but you're important to God
 - (5) You were set apart for divine service (i.e. "sanctified") by the Spirit
 - God sent the Spirit to shine the Gospel light into your heart and change your mind about sin, righteousness and judgment, so that you *would* repent and believe
 - (6) This was all done so that you'd become a Christian, obey the Gospel, and have Christ's work applied to your soul
- All three Persons of the Trinity are involved in your salvation
 - (1) If you're the new Christian in Bithynia:
 - this gives some extraordinary comfort to you,
 - as you think about life, late at night, when all your family, friends, community and *entire life* has gone up in smoke
 - because of your faith
 - (2) If you're a Christian today:
 - It does the very same thing

c. What does Peter mean by "chosen according to God the Father's plan?" How does this tie into his main point in the next

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section (1 Peter 1:3-9)? What difference does this make for your life?

- He means that the Christians he's writing to have been chosen by God for salvation, according to His plan
 - This is the only reason why *anybody* repents, believes the Gospel and comes to Christ - because they've been chosen for salvation by the Father
- This was true in the OT:
 - Abraham was chosen for salvation and service, when he was just an idolater (Josh 24:2-3)
 - The entire nation of Israel was chosen by God, just because He wanted to, not because of anything they deserved
 - **Read Deut 7:7-8**
 - **Read Deut 9:6**
- It is true in the NT:
 - **Read Lk 10:22**
 - **Read Jn 6:60-65**
- This is Peter's point:
 - (1) If you're a Christian, you were chosen by God for salvation, and you didn't deserve to be
 - (2) God is in charge of this world
 - (3) God is a good Father, and everything He does is for a good and holy reason
 - (4) A good father doesn't neglect his children, and God is the *best* Father
 - He knows what you're going through
 - He has planned and determined what you're going through
 - He is with you always
 - He will never leave you or forsake you - He isn't a negligent parent
 - **How do you know this?**
 - (1) Because you're a part of God's chosen people,
 - (2) who are the *new diaspora* scattered around the entire world,

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- (3) and you were chosen for salvation according to God the Father's plan
 - This is Gospel truth that can help you get through some very, very tough times

d. What does Peter mean by "resident foreigners . . . the diaspora" How does this tie into his main point in the next section (1 Peter 1:3-9)? What difference does this make for your life?

- It could mean two things, depending on how you want to emphasize it:
 - (1) Heaven is my real home!
 - This means Peter's point is that this is a temporary place for us; we're going someplace better when we die (cf. Heb 11:13-16)
 - E.g. "I'm serving God, but I really want to go home!"
 - (2) We're pilgrims in an unholy land!
 - The focus here is on the sense of community we should have as Christians, *together*, in a very pagan, very hostile world that hates God and His Son (cf. Eph 4:1-6)
 - E.g. "We're all children of God, and *that* means we're not alone, and *that* means we can serve the Lord together and help each other while we do it!"
- Given Peter's emphasis on the Christian community and suffering (e.g. 1 Pet 2:1-10; 4:7-19), I believe the second option is the best here

e. How does God actually *carry out* His plan of choosing? Who is the agent who gets this done?

- It is the Holy Spirit
 - Christians are chosen according to God the Father's plan, and that choosing is done by (or *through*; e.g. Tyndale, KJV, NIV) the Spirit
 - Some translations don't see it that way, but translate it as, "**in sanctification of the Spirit**" (NKJV, ESV)
 - The idea is that we've been chosen by God the Father's plan, for obedience to the Gospel and to have Christ's work applied

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to our hearts, so that we'll live our lives in the "realm" of the Spirit⁵

- I personally think this is wrong
- Peter is talking about the Spirit *calling* sinners to Christ; the reason why people repent and believe the Gospel is because **the Spirit called them** to salvation:
 - **"Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,"** (Heb 3:1)
 - Read **Acts 2:37-40**
 - **"Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant,"** (Heb 9:15)
 - **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,"** (1 Pet 2:9)
 - Read **Acts 16:11-15**
 - *Patsy's example:*
 - *the "horseshoe" was on the menu for me to see, but I wouldn't have ever tried it if the staff hadn't deliberately set out to change my mind about it!*
 - Read **1833 NHCF excerpt⁶**

⁵ Wayne Grudem takes this view. He wrote, "It is much easier, again, to see the phrase 'in sanctification of the Spirit' as referring to the entire present status of Peter's readers. This allows us to have its common sense 'in': Peter is saying that his readers' whole existence as 'chosen sojourners of the Dispersion ...' is being lived 'in' the realm of the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The unseen, unheard activity of God's Holy Spirit surrounds them almost like a spiritual atmosphere 'in' which they live and breathe, turning every circumstance, every sorrow, every hardship into a tool for his patient sanctifying work (cf. John 15:2; Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 12:10-11; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:14)," (*1 Peter*, in TNTC, vol. 17 [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988], 55-56).

This is ridiculous reasoning. He added, "there is no past tense verb in the phrase, which literally says, 'in sanctification of (the) Spirit,'" (*1 Peter*, 55). The Greek doesn't "literally" read that; context dictates how the preposition is rendered. Instrumental context is the best fit here.

⁶ The 1833 *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (Article 7) reads, "We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; **that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel;** and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life."

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f. What does Peter mean when he wrote that you are chosen “by the Spirit’s sanctification?” What is sanctification? How does this tie into his main point in the next section (1 Peter 1:3-9)? What difference does this make for your life?

- Remember, Peter is explaining *how* God made this plan to save you a reality. So, Peter could be talking about two things:
 - (1) The Spirit purified you, made you holy, cleansed you from all your sins, gave you a new heart, a new soul, and gave you new life in Christ, or
 - (2) The Spirit set you apart, dedicated you for service to Him
- It doesn't *necessarily* have to be either/or; it *could* be both⁷
 - (1) God chose you,
 - (2) and he made that plan a reality when He specifically sent the Spirit to call you to Christ
 - (3) When He called you to Christ, He purified your soul, gave you a new heart, gave you spiritual life,
 - (4) and He also set you apart as a special and important person to Him, so you could serve Him with your life

g. What are the two purposes, or results, of God’s choosing His people? That is, once the Spirit sanctifies a person, what happens next?

- Peter says God chose you for two reasons:
 - (1) to be obedient, and
 - (2) to be sprinkled with Christ’s blood

h. What obedience is Peter talking about? How does this tie into his main point in the next section (1 Peter 1:3-9)? What difference does this make for your life?

⁷ Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, in BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 70.

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- People have proposed three different options, and I don't think any of them are necessarily wrong, because we're basically splitting hairs at this point:
 - (1) Obedience to God (i.e. you repent and believe in the Messiah He sent)
 - (2) Obedience to the Gospel (i.e. you obey the command to repent and believe the Gospel; cf. Mk 1:14-15)
 - (3) Obedience to Jesus Christ (basically, the same thing as above)
- The only reason why you're obedient to the Gospel is because:
 - (1) you were chosen by the Father,
 - (2) then sanctified, made holy and set apart for service to Him by the Spirit,
 - (3) and God did this so that you'd be obedient to believe the Gospel
- If God chose to save you, then sent the Spirit to call you to Christ, all so that you'd be obedient to the Gospel . . . **do you really think:**
 - (1) He's forgotten about you?
 - (2) Abandoned you?
 - (3) Changed His mind about you?
 - (4) Given up on you?
 - (5) Washed His hands of you?
 - (6) Been surprised at anything sinful you've done, or thought?
 - (7) Do you think He doesn't care about you?
 - He hasn't, and He won't!

i. What "sprinkling" is Peter talking about? What does he mean? How does this tie into his main point in the next section (1 Peter 1:3-9)? What difference does this make for your life?

- Try and read this bit without your "Christian glasses" on; do you see why unbelievers might think this is weird and bizarre language!?
 - Consider the first stanza from the old hymn, "There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood:"
 - *There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;*
 - *And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*
 - *Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;*

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- *And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*
- Peter is using a reference from the Old Covenant to talk about the New Covenant
 - After God gave Moses a good bit of the Law (Ex 19-23), Moses called the 70 elders of Israel together, along with Aaron and his sons:
 - **Read Ex 24:3-11**
 - They agreed to follow God's covenant, and Moses *sprinkled* the blood of bulls and goats onto these leaders of Israel
 - The blood which symbolized atonement, the death of an unblemished and perfect animal for their our sins which allowed them to worship God and have fellowship with Him
 - When Moses literally *sprinkled* it onto the people, he was applying it to them in the most graphic way possible
 - The leaders followed Moses up the mountain and actually *saw God*, and they ate and drank a meal together, and had fellowship with God on the basis of their relationship - He was their God, and that made them His people
 - And, we know this goodwill and love for God didn't last long - the Israelites pressured Aaron to apostatize not long after (Ex 32)
- In the same way, we are God's *New Covenant* people:
 - **(1)** We have been sprinkled with Jesus' blood, *not* the blood of bulls and goats
 - **"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water,"** (Heb 10:19-22)
 - **(2)** This atonement is perfect and complete; *not* temporary, *not* based on credit
 - **(3)** Our sins have been paid for, and things have been set right between us and God

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- This is why Paul said, **“Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses,”** (Acts 13:38-39)
- This is the new covenant the prophet Ezekiel wrote about, which Jesus said was inaugurated with His own death, and the writer of Hebrews said was better than the old one:
 - **“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances,”** (Ezek. 36:26-27)

3. SO WHAT?:

- This passage is more than an introduction to be skipped or skimmed
 - Doctrinally, it shows you the individual role each Person of the Trinity plays in your salvation:^{8,9}
 - The Father chooses sinners
 - The Spirit sanctifies sinners
 - The Son cleanses from sinners *from* their sin by application of His shed blood of the New Covenant
 - Practically, it reminds you that, if you're a Christian:
 - (1) God chose you
 - (2) You're part of His plan
 - (3) You're part of an entire group of resident foreigners scattered throughout the world

⁸ This nice summary is from Simon J. Kistemaker (*James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, combined ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 37).

⁹ The 1833 *NHCF* (Article 2), reads, “We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; **that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.**”

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- (4) The Holy Spirit set you apart to serve God; He purified your soul and made you perfect and holy, by shining the light of the Gospel into your life,
- (5) He did this so that you would repent and believe in the Gospel, and be obedient to Him
- (6) He did this:
 - so you'd be sprinkled with Christ's blood, the blood of the New and better Covenant,
 - so you'd be adopted into His family,
 - and so you'll be His child, and He'll be your Father

- From the hymn, "To God Be the Glory:"

*O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He has done.*

- **This** is why you can rejoice, while you serve the Lord and experience things in this world that, sometimes, aren't very happy at all