

Subject: *Christians Are a Privileged People*

Scripture: *1 Peter 1:1-5*

First and Second Peter were both written by the apostle Peter. This first letter was sent to the “strangers scattered” in areas of Asia Minor (Turkey). Peter refers to them in this way because they had been displaced from their homes due to their persecution as Christians. So this letter was written to persecuted Christians during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero around 64 A.D. Peter wrote to comfort them in a time of intense suffering, and he began the letter by reminding them of their rich blessings in Christ and their future hope of heaven. They had great hope in what seemed to be a hopeless situation.

Peter began this letter by referring to the glorious privileges they had through the gospel of Christ. In the midst of their troubles and suffering Peter reminds them that they were not alone and God had not abandoned them. Peter points them to Christ as their example to be faithful in their suffering, and he reminds them of God’s love and grace that brought them into His family. Peter called them “strangers” (aliens, pilgrims) because they don’t belong to this world anymore. As Jesus taught in John 17, Christians are in the world but not of the world. We live by different values and different standards from the world. In fact, we live for a different world. We are pilgrims living for a brief time on earth while we make our way to heaven where our treasure is. The overall message of First Peter is “Look up!” The best is yet to come. Peter deals with two main themes in the text: 1) the believer’s present blessings, verses 2-3; and 2) the believer’s future blessings, verses 4-5.

1. The believer’s present blessings (vs. 2-3)

Peter begins by blessing God who is the source of all our blessings (vs. 3). Peter begins the same way that Paul did in two of his letters. We ought to bless the One who blesses us.

2 Corinthians 1:3 *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.*

Ephesians 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*

This is how David began Psalm 103.

Psalms 103:1-2 ¹ *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.* ² *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Then Peter reminds these believers what God has done for them in salvation. He describes their blessings come to them from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

A. Believers are elect (chosen) and foreknown by God the Father

The Father chooses (elects) all those who are saved. Some of Paul’s letters begin in the same way. **Romans 1:7** *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Ephesians 1:4-6 ⁴ *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:* ⁵ *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,* ⁶ *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

1 Thessalonians 1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

Election is the work of God. Believers are chosen by God the Father to be saved and belong to His family. The focus here is entirely on the work of God and the blessings of God for believers. There is an illustration used that goes like this. When you get saved God casts a vote for you and the devil casts a vote against you, and then you cast the deciding vote. That may sound good, but it's not biblical. God chooses His people and works in our heart and life to accomplish our salvation.

Peter links election (being chosen by God) with God's foreknowledge of those He has chosen. That means more than just knowing beforehand. It is an act of God by which He determines from eternity that those He had chosen would come to a state of grace and eventually to a state of glory. Foreknowledge is not just God's prior knowledge of what would happen to those who will be saved. It is a loving relationship that God has ordained to take place. This word is found as a verb and a noun seven times in the NT. The word itself means "to know beforehand." In Acts 26:5 it refers to the Jews' previous knowledge of Paul and in 2 Peter 3:17 it refers to the believer's knowledge of future events based on divine revelation. All other NT references are to God's foreknowledge. Here are some other verses to help us understand what it means.

Romans 8:28-30 ²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Romans 11:2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.

1 Peter 1:18-20 ¹⁸ Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ²⁰ Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

The word in 1 Peter 1:20 translated "foreordained" is the same word translated "foreknown." It was not only known beforehand that Christ would die to redeem sinners, but it was pre-determined that He would die. He was chosen and ordained to do that.

B. Believers are sanctified (set apart) by the Holy Spirit

This sanctification or setting apart is a work of the Holy Spirit that begins at conversion and continues throughout a believer's life until he gets to heaven. In sanctification believers are set apart from sin and the world and become a part of the church (called out body of Christ). Sanctification takes place over time in three ways: First, there is positional sanctification. When we first commit our lives to Christ for salvation, we are set apart for His purpose and plan. We belong to Him and live for His glory. Second, there is progressive sanctification as the Holy Spirit makes us more like Christ and sets us apart to serve Christ, know Him better, and bear spiritual fruit. Third, there is perfect sanctification when God sets us apart from this world forever, makes us like Christ, and takes us to be with Christ in heaven. This final stage of sanctification is also known as glorification.

C. Believers are redeemed by the blood of Christ

When we obey the gospel Christ by faith and repentance, the saving and redeeming power of His blood is applied to us. The reference to sprinkling brings to mind the way God sealed the covenant relationship with His people. Peter will come back to this truth again (1:18-19). The Christian life is marked by obedience from the beginning from the beginning to the end of our earthly life. Obedience is mentioned in 1:14, and 1:22. We are saved to obey Christ.

D. Believers are born again to a living hope

God gives His people a new heart and a new nature. Believers have new life and new hope, a living hope. This living hope is eternal life. We have life and hope because we have a living Lord and Savior (vs. 3). I want to come back to this living hope in our next message. For now, I want to close by reminding you that all these blessings are freely given to all believers in Christ. Did you notice as we combed through these verses...there is not one word about what believers have done for God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, but only what the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have done for believers. These blessings and privileges are not given to those who work for them or deserve them or earn them. No, it's all about what God has done through His abundant mercy. And along with these blessings Peter mentions the additional blessings of God's grace and peace (vs. 2). Yes, in Christ we are a very privileged people.