

SONGS: Redeemed (“Redeemed—how I love to proclaim it!”); My Hope Is In The Lord; I Am Resolved (I am resolved no longer to linger”)

CLOSE:

The Trinity ... At Work

Profiling Christians – Part 3 of 6

TEXT: 1 Peter 1:2

AIM: To show that each member of the Godhead is vitally involved in the salvation of every believer. This gives basis for immeasurable grace and peace to every believer no matter the circumstance. We are to consider every circumstance and situation in light of God’s eternal purposes and plans.

INTRODUCTION:

A. In the wake of the tumultuous rioting in the UK in 2011...

...Coupled with uncontrollable looting and violence, Great Britain’s chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks decried what he called the “moral disintegration” of the western world.

In his remarks, which would immediately disqualify him as a US presidential candidate today, he made a number of comments that – as you can imagine – provoked a wide variety of responses.

His remarks were printed in a Wall Street Journal article in which he said that what we’re seeing is – quote – “the tsunami of wishful thinking that washed across the West saying that you can have sexual activity without the responsibility of marriage, [you can have] children without the responsibility of parenthood, [you can have] social order ... and liberty without the responsibility of morality, [and that you can have] self-esteem without the responsibility of work and earned achievement.”

He went on to say, “What has happened morally in the West is what has happened financially as well ... sensible people were persuaded that you could spend more than you earn, incur debt at unprecedented levels and consume the world’s resources without thinking about who will pay the bill.

Then he concluded, “There are large parts of Britain, Europe, and the United States where religion is a thing of the past, and there is no counter-voice now to the [prevailing] culture of buy it, spend it, wear it, flaunt it, because you’re worth it. The message today is that morality is passé, a conscience is for [the weak] and the single overriding command of life is [now] – “Thou shalt not be found out.”¹

It’s true ... but the greater point for the believer isn’t so much how the darkness has grown, but how shall we demonstrate the light? How do you live, as a believer, in a world that is returning to the times of the Apostle Peter?

Peter was writing to disenfranchised believers; marginalized followers of Christ who had lost their careers, their homes, their credibility and any semblance of compassion from their world around them. They were simply no longer wanted.

B. As Peter writes to them his first letter I invite you to TURN to Peter’s 1:1

Here we find the Apostle Peter addressing these believers whom he describes in **verse 1** as scattered like seed in the wind throughout “*Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia*” – a region that covered 750,000 square miles.

This was no quick postcard to a dozen people. The “*strangers scattered throughout*” did not just refer to the Jewish nation—but quite probable to Gentiles who had been dispersed—

¹ Jonathan Sacks, “Reversing the Decay of London Undone,” *The Wall Street Journal* (Aug-20-11)

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903639404576516252066723110>

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B-5-JeCa2Z7hNkJqBE5qMVRUVHFuaHc1LW5rMVFMZw/edit>

“scattered” by persecution among the surrounding nations, therefore applies to all believer’s who make up God’s people through the ages. **Note: 1:14 cp. 4:3-4.**

These believers were scattered like seed; wherever it seemed the wind would take them – wherever they could find a place to settle down and survive.

The questions on tens of thousands of Christians’ minds would have been something like:

What in the world just happened?

How’d I get here?

Is God in control of the chaos around us?

And, what in this new world, does God want us to do?

Peter’s letter will do nothing less of providing instruction for us concerning these questions.

C. Let me give you an illustration of the Christian life

Imagining how difficult it would be for someone in a helicopter to drop somewhere into the Amazonian jungle, pick up a tribesman who’d never been out of the jungle before, fly him immediately to London [or New York], drop him off in the middle of the city and then tell him, “You’re on your own, try to make the best of it ... bye, bye!”

We are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who is in charge of running it. Disregard its Creator and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you.²

So it’s little surprise that in the beginning to address the subject of how to live for Christ in an unwelcoming world, Peter begins by describing God – who is our refuge and strength.

To be more specifically, Peter describes how each member of the Godhead – Father, Son and Spirit – has intersected the life of the believer.

And he does it in three statements – you might want to number them in your text:

- The first statement begins with **vs. 2** – “*...according to the foreknowledge of God...*” – that’s the first prepositional phrase;
- The second phrase follows – “*...through sanctification of the Spirit...*”
- The third phrase follows – “*...unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...*”

This is the long way of making the theological point that every member of the Godhead—Father, Son and Spirit—is involved in the gospel.

Every member of the Godhead is involved in the salvation of every believer.

And it’s much more than that!

When you read on, at the end of **vs. 2**, you discover that on the basis of every member of the Triune God investing in redeeming and sanctifying and cleansing every one of us, the believer can actually experience – in any country, in any generation, under any government, through any season of life, whether in the 1st century or the 21st century, **“grace...and peace” in the fullest measure!**

Now let’s break apart these phrases and get to the heart of why this would be so encouraging for struggling, marginalized, suffering, unwelcomed, and unwanted believers.

And let me take these three phrases and turn them into our outline.

I. THE FIRST POINT IS THIS: THE BELIEVER IS SAVED AND SCATTERED BY GOD THE FATHER

² J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 19

Let's go back and get a running start with **vs. 1** – *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [then in vs. 2] Elect [chosen] – now notice – according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...”* (1 Peter 1:1–2)

A. Peter specifically relates this particular aspect of the gospel to God the Father—God the Father did the choosing!

1. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God the Father chose the believer *“before the foundation of the world”* (Ephesians 1:4).
 - a. This means election WAS NOT based on anything we have done, because we were not on the scene. Nor was it based on anything God saw that we would be or do.
 - b. God the Father is portrayed in Scripture as the initiator of salvation – the first Mover in the eternal movement of redemption.
 - c. John writes, in **1 John 4:19** that *“...we love Him because He first loved us!”*
2. And now in **vs. 2** Peter is revealing that God's love for us actually preceded the creation of the world – that from eternity past, God the Father foreknew His beloved.
3. And keep in mind that foreknowing, in the Bible, carries much more than mental awareness; it involves a deep, intimate love – for God to foreknow us is for God to 'forelove' us.

B. The Apostle John again defines God's saving initiative as an act of love for us before we ever knew Him or chose to love Him in return – 1 John 4:10

1. John says Jesus was *“the propitiation for our sins.”*
 - a. Propitiation is the act of appeasing a deity, thus incurring divine favour or avoiding divine retribution
 - b. Christ completely satisfied the just demands of our Holy Father for judgment on sin, by his death at Calvary
2. Now there are many who would say that this phrase in Peter's letter – *“Elect [chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...”* – means that God elected those whom He foreknew would believe. It kind of sounds like that here doesn't it? *Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God ...*
 - a. And they would say that God, in His omniscience, simply looked down the corridor of time and saw all who would believe the gospel and He then called them His elect and chose them for salvation and guaranteed they would reach heaven.
 - b. That's actually a reasonable explanation ... in fact; it's one I can understand ... which automatically gives me pause.
 - 1) The problem is, among other problems, it strips away any biblical concept of God choosing you and me first ... of God loving you and me first.
 - 2) It makes God simply respond to us – which is tantamount to making us the author of our salvation – the initiator of our salvation, and not God.

C. When Peter used the word prognosis – “foreknowledge” – in vs. 2, he was not talking about God simply knowing in advance what would happen...

1. **BUT** that God had planned – predetermined by His loving and saving intention – to redeem His beloved.
 - a. Now exactly whom did He love? **John 3:16** – *“For God so loved the world...”* and all people in it!

- b. So, why isn't everyone now saved? Because of the simple fact they chose not to be! **John 3:19** – *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*
 - c. Paul told the Thessalonians in **1 Thess. 2:13** that they were chosen *“to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth...”*
 - d. We are *“sanctified in Christ”* (1Cor. 1:2) *“by faith”* (Acts 26:18) the moment we are saved! This sanctification comes about
 - e. In **2 Tim 2:10** Paul stated he endured all things *“for the elects sake.”*
 - 1) Paul said he went through hardships so that they (speaking of the elect) *“...MAY ALSO obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus...”*
 - 2) In other words, the elect (not yet save) here have to *“obtain”* their salvation (by repenting and believing the gospel).
 - 3) It therefore seems clear that this verse implies that ALL MEN are chosen (elected) by God to be saved, BUT man has to choose, by faith, to obtain that salvation!
2. Peter in fact, uses the verb form translated – **“foreordained”** – later down in **verse 20** to tell us that the death of Jesus Christ to redeem sinners was foreknown by God the Father.
- a. This cannot mean that God the Father looked into future history and saw that Jesus would choose to die, so God the Father made Him the Saviour.
 - b. Peter, in fact, preached on the Day of Pentecost that the death of Christ was according to – and I'm quoting him *“...the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God...”* (Acts 2:23).
 - c. From eternity past, the plans of God were made – which defies our comprehension. And if you're thinking, man, this all staggers my thinking – then I think we're on the right path.
- God the Father chose you and me in a way that is beyond our comprehension;
 - God the Son paid the penalty for our sin in a way that is beyond our comprehension – I mean, how did He do that? – Pay the penalty for a sin over 2,000 years ago that you're going to commit 2 weeks from tomorrow. His payment is beyond our comprehension.
 - And while we're at it – the Holy Spirit indwells us in a way that is beyond our comprehension – He – an eternal Person...indwells us? How you doing on that one?
 - And don't forget, our Triune God has destined us and prepared for us an eternity that is beyond our comprehension.

And here's where it immediately mattered to these believers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia and Dublin, and London, and Largo, and Tokyo – Christians who are now recognizing that they are really foreigners on earth, maligned and unloved and unwanted ... here's where they would have breathed in a deep breath of hope and security.

D. Peter is telling them that the foreknowledge of God the Father doesn't just relate to their SALVATION, but their SITUATION.

1. You can just as easily understand Peter to be saying here in **vs. 2**, *“You have been chosen by God to not only be saved, but to be scattered.”*
 - a. This is all according to the plan of God, from eternity past.

- b. And realise this, if before the creation of the world, God chose you – He isn't going to lose sight of you now!
2. Like seed, from the hand of the gardener, you haven't just been scattered, you have been planted by the foreknowledge and forelove and foreplan of God the Father.
3. The chaos of the Roman empire hasn't caught God by surprise ... in fact, God is in control of the chaos – and as I said in our last message on Peter, the world is never falling apart – according to the foreknowledge and plan of God – the world is always in place.

The believer is SAVED and SCATTERED by God the Father and...

II. SECONDLY, THE BELIEVER IS SANCTIFIED AND SET APART BY GOD THE SPIRIT

Look again at vs. 2 – *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, – now notice – through sanctification of the Spirit...”*

Now watch this –

A. Peter is moving us from the foreknowledge of God the Father in eternity past to the work of God the Spirit as He intersects our lives in time-present.

1. The word Peter uses here *“sanctification”* refers to the sanctifying activity – the on-going process – of making us holy and separate as God's people; this is a sanctifying activity by means of the Spirit of God that starts and never stops.
 - By the way, it was the Holy Spirit, according to Scripture, who drew you by His love to a saving relationship with God.
 - It is the Holy Spirit who resonates in your heart regarding the truth of Scripture – *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him...”* (1 Corinthians 2:14).
 - It is the Holy Spirit fuels true and genuine worship and even prayer – *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us...”* (Romans 8:26).
2. All of your Christian experience – the beginning, middle and end of the Christian life – is the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. There are two different ways to interpret this on-going work of God's Spirit in your life...
 - a. You can say it one of two ways: God **never leaves us** alone (i.e. He never stops interacting with us) ... or ... God never leaves us **alone** (i.e. abandon's us)!
 - b. **Both are true!**
 - 1) In fact, one of our biggest mistakes is to think that you can somehow get through today – much less life – without the indwelling sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) One of the most tragic mistakes of any assembly is to think that church programs and plans and strategies can produce fruit independently of the power of God's Spirit.

B. If the Spirit of God exited our church, how long do you think our church would operate before we figured it out He was gone?

1. How long would it take in your own personal life to discover your powerlessness in your daily life, and work and that you were all on your own?

2. Have you ever experienced a power fail either from a thunderstorms or some equipment fault? When it happens—power is always lost sudden ... and fortunately it is temporary. It's amazing how primitive life becomes all over again, without power.
3. In fact, when the power in your house goes out, it doesn't matter how much you paid for your washing machine, or dryer, or refrigerator, or microwave, or lighting system, or computers, or cell phones. Without electricity they can no longer be charged ... and even if you paid your bill in full, without power, they are all worth about as much as the cardboard boxes they came in.
4. Our lives are like those appliances. There is not one function you can fulfill for God's glory without God's power.

C. BUT the Holy Spirit is more than power – He is a Person.

1. It is by the means of a relationship with Him that comes the power to live, and work, and disciple, and evangelize, and function in our world.
 - a. I think Peter would be encouraging these believers to not only know that God hasn't left them alone—
 - 1) BUT that He's at work through the Spirit sanctifying them
 - 2) Making them different, and distinctive, and holy, and separate from this world.
 - b. I don't know what was in Peter's mind, but I can't help but believe that he knew it would be incredibly encouraging for his scattered readers – who felt so separated from the world – to be reminded that the work of the Spirit of God was to keep them set apart unto God and separate from this world!
2. If you feel more and more like a foreigner in this world ... if you feel more and more separated and different from this world – guess what?
 - a. It is the Spirit of God at work reminding you that you belong, not to the kingdoms of earth, but to the kingdom of Heaven.
 - b. You, like all these scattered believers in Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia, are in the world, but not really a part of it!

➤ **The believer is SAVED and SCATTERED by God the Father**

➤ **The believer is SANCTIFIED and SET APART by God the Spirit**

III. THIRDLY, THE BELIEVER IS SURRENDERED TO AND SPRINKLED CLEAN BY GOD THE SON

Notice the last part of vs. 2 – “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...”

A. “Unto obedience” – i.e. to obey Jesus Christ –

1. The Gk. word used here conveys the picture of listening to and complying i.e. submitting to that, which is heard.
2. It refers to daily practice – though imperfect – of reversing the attitude that characterizes the unbeliever of rebellion to what God has said.
3. Unbelievers don't want to hear and practice what God says. But we do!
 - a. Peter is going to stress this kind of obedience – in fact – down at vs. 14 he challenges us to be like “obedient children”. I mean, how different is that?! Maybe you've seen that in your children from time to time?

- b. Down further in vs. 22 he uses the same Gk. word again to challenge us to be obedient to the truth.
 - c. In other words, the work of salvation that was determined in eternity past by God the Father, brought about by means of the Holy Spirit, ought to somewhere along the line show up in us.
4. Peter goes on in vs. 2 to reference the cleansing we have by *“the blood of Jesus Christ”*.
- a. This is a most timely reminder, simply because our obedience and repentance alone doesn't save us – it is our faith in God's grace that does!
 - b. Our assurance is based on the blood Lord Jesus Christ shed and the payment He made on our behalf.

B. Sin is ONLY remitted by blood! >> TURN Heb. 9:11-14; 19-28

Heb. 9:22 – *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”*

1. If you go back to the OT Book of Exodus, Moses gathered the people at Mount Sinai and delivered to them the commandments and ordinances of God given **chapter 20**.
 - a. After Moses told the Israelites in *“the words of the Lord”* they said *“with one voice...All that the LORD hath said we will do, and be obedient”* (Ex. 24:3, 7).
 - b. After which Moses sprinkled the people with sacrificial blood and they entered into an eternal covenant as God's people (Ex. 24:8).
 - 1) Peter is no doubt dipping back into this context because he now refers to the people of God as those who've effectively said, *“Everything the Lord has said we will do.”*
 - 2) And the believer has been sprinkled with the blood of the final sacrifice, Jesus Christ, for their sins and entered into an eternal covenant as God's people.
2. If you dig around in the Old Testament you also discover that there were two other occasions where an individual was sprinkled with blood.
 - a. When Aaron and the priests were set apart for their ministry unto God as priests, the sign of them being set apart was the sprinkling of blood (Ex. 29:21).

So also, the NT believer is said, by Peter to belong to *“a royal priesthood”* (1 Pt. 2:9) – able to serve for God – being sprinkled and set apart by the blood of Christ for service.
 - b. The second instance where a person was sprinkled with the blood of a sacrificial animal occurred when a leper had been healed of leprosy symbolizing that he was now cleansed (Lev. 14)
3. The writer of Hebrews picks up on this illustration as he encourages the NT believer to *“draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience...”* (Hebrews 10:22).
 - a. Today's believer was once leprous with a terminal case of sin ... but he listened to the gospel and obeyed its command to *“call upon the name of the Lord”* and be saved (Rom 10:13).
 - b. If you have done that you can testify to the fact the Spirit opened your eyes and drew you in faith to Christ – AND cleansed your sin forever by the blood of the Lamb of God – Jesus Christ our Saviour.

- ❖ All the penalty for all your sin – forever forgiven
- ❖ All the guilt of all your sin – forever swept away.

I read just recently an article about George Washington.

It seems that when he was in his first term as president of the United States, he borrowed a book. The book he borrowed was entitled, *The Law of Nations* and he borrowed it from New York Society Library.

And then when he was finished with it ... good old George Washington promptly forgot to return it ... ever! And the library never brought the issue up. After all, he was a national hero, and the first president. You just don't ask people like him for your book back.

For the next 221 years, it sat on a shelf in Washington's Virginia home, until 2010. In 2010, the Mount Vernon staff finally noticed it, I suppose, and sent it back.

The overdue book fine was \$300,000 dollars.

Fortunately, the head librarian decided to forgive the fine.³

Can you imagine the fines – the penalties – against us?

And having been forgiven, what more would you want to do than turn around and obey Jesus Christ your Redeemer – the one who graciously forgave you and continually cleanses you from all sin.

YOU and I could do what George Whitefield did – the Puritan theologian and chief spokesman of the great awakening in the 1700's – once said, "I have put my life, as a blank [canvass] into the hands of Jesus Christ my Redeemer, and desire Him to write upon it whatever He pleases."

Now Peter has written here a truckload of truth. But the point of his declaration is again simply this – **every member of the Godhead is involved in the salvation of every believer.**

CONCLUSION:

Salvation comes to us from the Trinity; it happens through the Trinity and will one day it will bring us home to the Trinity – to our great God, three in One; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

- ⇒ You are chosen by God the Father
- ⇒ You are inhabited by God the Spirit
- ⇒ You are under orders and constant cleansing by God the Son

C. This is summarized so simply and so wonderfully with this saying:

- It is the Father who thought it;
- It is the Spirit who wrought it;
- It is the Son who bought it⁴

D. Peter concludes his opening thoughts by writing at the end of vs. 2 ...

"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

1. This is no throwaway line. Peter is writing to both Jewish and Gentile believers here. And in this greeting he very wisely combined expressions from Jewish and Gentile customs.

³ *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, David Gibson & Jonathan Gibson editors (Crossway, 2013), p. 366

⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter* (Kregel, 2005), p. 30

- a. Gentiles would say hello to one another with a derivative of the Gk. word *charis*, or “*grace*.”
- b. Jews wished each other “*peace*”, from *eirene* in the Gk. language or, *shalom* – “*peace*”, in the Hebrew.
- c. But to the average Gentile or Jew, these were shallow greetings and blessings.
 - 1) Wishing *grace* in the first century was like saying, “Good luck ... I hope all your deals work out.”
 - 2) Wishing *peace* or shalom on someone was nothing more than saying ... “I hope everything stays calm and trouble free.”
2. The peace Peter has in mind isn’t the lack of conflict or trouble – in fact, these believers were in trouble – and many still are today.
 - a. For the believer, *peace* is internal ... it is the conscious awareness that God is in control.
 - b. The *grace* Peter has in mind here isn’t good luck – it is in understanding the gracious providence and plans and purposes of God ... that even hardships have the purposes of God behind them.
3. Peter wants grace and peace “*be multiplied*” in their lives – and he writes very personally to these scattered, wandering believers.
 - a. He specifically emphasizes that he wants grace and peace, not just multiplied, but also multiplied to them.
 - b. The verb he uses for “*multiplied*” is in the passive voice – which is a gentle reminder from Peter that grace and peace aren’t something believers can run after and get, or create on our own – we could only receive them.
 - c. *And the giver and multiplier of grace and peace aren’t mentioned here. Who’s the multiplier? Who’s the giver – the donor of these gifts?*
 - d. Though not immediately mentioned, the donor is obviously, in this context, is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

E. So Peter concludes his introduction – by reminding us of who God is – what God does in and through the gospel – and who we are as we relate to our Triune God.

All three persons have been, from eternity past, in perfect harmony and unity working out so great a salvation – and they will continue into eternity future.

I close with the personal testimony of Warren Wiersbe, the former pastor of Moody Church and for years a Bible Teacher on the syndicated radio program, Back to the Bible.

He writes on this text from his own experience. And I want to close with this because I want to leave with you the question – *is this your testimony as well?* The dates will be different, but the action points remain the same. I can tell you, this is my testimony. *Is it yours?*

Wiersbe writes; 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 and paid the penalty for all my sin. But as far as the Spirit is concerned, when He came to indwell me, I was saved one night in May 1945 when I heard the gospel and placed my faith in Jesus Christ. Then it all came together. It took all three Persons of the Godhead to bring me to salvation. And if we separate these ministries, we will either deny divine sovereignty or human responsibility. We cannot explain it ... but we can [experience it] and we can rejoice in it – forever.⁵

⁵ Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *1 Peter: Be Hopeful* (David C Cook, 1982), p. 31

4 June 2017, Morn. – River Valley BC – Maynooth, Co. Kildare