

Grieving Saints Gladdened by the Gospel
1 Peter 1:1-12 (Part 1)

[Read/Pray]. I write my sermons on Mondays, at least about 80% of it. I fill it in during the rest of the week. Sometimes a lot happens between Monday and Sunday. It turned out to be an extra exhausting and incredibly sad week.

- I was upset by Ahmaud Arbery murder, from the stories of the previous week. (Many of us ran 2.23 miles in honor of his 26th birthday on Friday (as he loved to run), symbolic of the date in which this young man was hunted down and killed in GA on Feb 23rd).
- And of course we're in this never ending quarantine with all the sad stories of this virus.
- Then I had a friend call me early Friday morning and tell me that our friend Darrin Patrick died from a self-inflicted gun shot wound.
 - Darrin had been a friend for many years and left behind a grieving wife and four children.
 - We had texted multiple times recently.
 - Last year we went to the playoffs together.
 - He was one of the greatest encouragers to me over the last year or so.

“Grieved Saints Gladdened by the Gospel.” I don't know who needs to hear this, but I do.

With so much grief, sorrow, tragedy and death in the world, it's wonderful to read of the hope of the gospel in this passage.

Today we start a series entitled “**God's People.**”

- Peter explains what it means to be the new covenant people of God.
- “for once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.” (2:10)
- It's God's scattered people that Peter addresses. Something we can relate to.
- We've said many times, the church is not a building you go to, nor an event you attend (as good and important as these things are), but rather, it's a people to whom you belong.

The significance of this letter is stated at the end of the book: “This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.” (1 Pet 5.12)

- Cloney: “The most condensed NT resume of the Christian faith and of the conduct that it inspires”
- Luther believed it contained *all that was necessary for a Christian to know.*

It covers so many important topics about the Christian life, and it gives us a glorious portrait of **Jesus.**

- Peter presents him as the **object** of our faith and the **pattern** for life.
- And Jesus resurrection life is the **source** of our new life.

There's a strong emphasis on **hope.**

Joseph Parker once said to a group of Aspiring ministers, “Preach to the suffering and you will never lack a congregation. There is a broken heart in every pew.”

- It's safe to assume that everyone I meet is dealing with something in their life; and it's safe to assume that no one I meet is over-encouraged.
- Peter shows us where our greatest encouragement in trials comes from: the gospel.

Look at the verse that sets context, verse 6 – “In this your rejoice”

Greatly Rejoice (agalliao from **agan** = much + **hallomai** = jump; gush, leap, spring up) means literally to “**jump much**”, “**leap for joy**”

- “**Chris Cross make you wanna, jump, jump...** Christ's cross and resurrection will!

Is this you? Are you naturally one who rejoices?

- You have to fight for joy in suffering.”

“**little while**” – How long is that? 70 years or so if we're fortunate.

- It's all of life in a fallen world.
- In 27 billion years in the presence of Jesus, it will seem short.
- **For the Christian, this is as close to hell as you will ever get!**

“**grieve**” – it's normal. It's right. It's even good.

- One mother told me recently, “**When I think of parenting, one word comes to mind: “grief.”**”

“**various**” – **many colored**, various kinds or suffering.

Same word for various **spiritual gifts** in 1 Peter 4:10.

1. Relationships Conflicts
2. Job Insecurity
3. Unbelieving Spouses (1 Peter 3)
4. Opposition. **Context of 1 Peter: Christians were ridiculed, marginalized by society, alienated in relationships, threatened with and experiencing a loss of honor and social standing for your faith.**
5. **Persecution** – Under Neronian persecution, Christians were attacked by dogs, crucified, and being used as candlesticks during the night. **It hadn't got that bad yet when Peter writes, but it would.**

How do you endure? Where do you go for encouragement?

Wrong Counsel

- **Trite Counsel** – “just be positive” “Avoid negative energy” “make lemonade”
- **Home Remedies** – “Eat more wheat grass”
- **Prosperity Gospel** – “you don't have faith”
- **Over Spiritualized:** “Jesus fixes everything when we get saved”

Wrong Response

- **Angry at God** - Naomi
- **Envy** – “I want their life, his job, their kids”
- **Self-Pity** – “Woe is me” – pride
- **Functional Saviors** – drugs, drink, sex, entertainment, surgery

What do you do? To whom do you listen? What do you fill your mind with?

- The letter begins (v. 3) with praise!
- He calls their attention to the good news of the gospel.

He gives 6 Reasons to Rejoice (3 this week and 3 next week)

Greeting (1:1-2)

Peter – One of the key leaders of the early church. The original “**The Rock**”

- His story is one of extraordinary grace and faith. (confession/denial/restoration/preaching)
- “Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” (Lk 22:31-32)
- This letter is one of the (many) ways a restored brother strengthened the family of God.
- He eventually traveled to Rome after the events of Acts 12, when Herod tried to kill him.
- He wrote this letter in late 50’s or early 60’s from Rome (Babylon, 5:13)
- Tradition has that Peter was martyred during Nero.
- Shortly after, Mark wrote his gospel based on Peter’s reminiscences.
- He knew what it was to struggle, to sin and be restored, and to suffer.

Some have wondered, “Could he have written this? **This old fisherman?**

- **Look at this Greek and look at this theology!** How can a Galilean write Scripture?
- (Some have wondered this about me – not writing the Bible of course).
- The answer is Yes.
 - Peter was a middle-class fishermen who **likely knew Greek from his youth.**
 - “Uneducated” (Acts 4) did not mean illiterate; it meant he lacked rabbinic training.
 - But he had been with Jesus himself, so I would say he has necessary credentials.
 - **Who’d you study under? Jesus.**

Dispersion – best theory: these were primarily Gentile believers who had been expelled from Rome due to Claudius’ edict (cf., Acts 18:2).

- He expelled a large number of Christians.
- We know Claudius populated each of these areas with deportees.
- So he is writing to them to encourage them as they are **dislocated in two ways**: (1) from their **natural home**, and from (2) their **heavenly home**. (2:11; Heb 11:13)
- They’re double strangers, with the second being most important.

These areas are in modern Turkey (**show map**)

- Paul never got this far North based on Acts.
- This area taken together is the size of the states of **New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.**

He’s writing about distinct problems, regarding Christ and culture. (Wendland)

Problems Addressed in 1 Peter

1. Physical and psychological pressure
2. Social ostracism and exclusion
3. Pull from their old way of life
4. A surrounding non-Christian worldview
5. Inconsistent behavior within the fellowship
6. Doubts about God's promises
7. Satan's constant and deadly temptations

What he wants them to know off the jump is this: God has chosen you.

- Let that sink in.

“Elect exiles” (God's scattered people; *rejected but selected*)

- You're not at home, but God has lavished his love upon you from before the foundation of the world. (Eph 1)
- This highlights our vertical and horizontal life if you will – **chosen exiles**.
- Election as elsewhere is stated as **a comfort**.
- Despite persecution, he says, you can be assured of God's purposes and of God's grace.

Notice how **Trinitarian** this salvation is.

- Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father
- Chosen by the consecration of the Spirit
- Chosen for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus

Our election originates with God the **Father**. **foreknown**: **fore-loved**. (cf., 1:14)

- It's not just about God knowing in advance, but it denotes a special love before creation.
- **Amos 3.2** – “I know” – he knows everyone an informational sense; but this is a special knowledge of relationships.
- What about faith and obedience and responsibility? That's present also in Peter.
- This is a great mystery of the faith.

It is made operative *by or through* the **Spirit**.

- Our faith is experienced by the Spirit from beginning to end.
- **Consecrated** – set apartness; the definitive act of making one positionally holy, set apart once and for all. (“holy priesthood,” 1 Pet 2; “sanctified in the Spirit” **1 Cor 1:2**).
- **Our faith is a gracious act of the Spirit who gives us eyes to see, who convicts us of sin, leads us to repentance and faith, assures us of pardon and transforms us into holy people.**

It is evidenced through expressions of *faith in* and *obedience to* **Jesus**.

- The Spirit doesn't lead us to a vague mystical faith, but one that is Christ-centered.
- He brings us to faith in Jesus, who brought the new covenant by his blood.
- It's not a generic spirituality.

There's a reference to the **covenant ceremony in Exodus 24**, which involved a pledge of obedience and sprinkling of blood (by an animal).

- **Exodus 24:3-8** – obedience and blood.
- God can't begin this relationship without sacrifice. They pledge obedience in response, but we know the story of disobedient.
- This is Peter's way of **speaking the new covenant people of God: forgiven by the blood (a once and for all and an ongoing forgiveness), empowered for obedience.**
- We have been chosen for obedience made possible through the blood Jesus.

Your fundamental identity is not that you live in Pontus, but that you're **God's people.**

- In your suffering, remember God's electing grace.
- God purposed to have you for himself, to the praise of his glorious grace.
- **We are elect exiles if we belong to Jesus, awaiting our eternal home.**

May grace and peace be multiplied to you...

#1: Regeneration (1:3)

3a: Praise to God

- The Father is to be celebrated and delighted in for who he is and what he has done.
- Trials blur and blind our view of God's goodness, faithfulness and mercy.
- There's one sentence **beginning in verse 3. One big holy run-on sentence!**
- Why? Because his subject is *salvation*. He can't stop!
- The following verses tell us why we should adore God.

Here: Father "of our Lord Jesus" not God "our Father" like most greetings in NT

- Part of the glory of God the Father is the way he relates to Jesus.
- We come to know God as Father through faith in the Lord Jesus. When we are united to the true Son we are sons and daughters of God. What is his is ours.

The first thing he mentions is **regeneration**.

- We have new life in Christ
- being "born again," or "new birth."
- We didn't need to just clean up a bit; or to turn over a new leaf; we need new life.
- **Regeneration doesn't perfect us, but it does change us.**
- C.S. Lewis in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* depicts the change that takes place in the life of the previously obnoxious Eustace. "It would be nice, and fairly near true, to say 'from that time forth Eustace was a different boy.' To be strictly accurate, he began to be a different boy. He had relapses. There were still many days when he could be very tiresome. But most of those I shall not notice. The cure had begun."
- Amen, the cure has begun.

A. **Regeneration is necessary, not optional** (John 3:3)

- What does it take to get to heaven? Works, ascent? No! New birth.
- How do you know you are born again? How do you know you were born? *It is by the fact that you are alive!*

- 1 John 3 – you” love the brother and sisters”
- **Augustine (dramatic) and Lewis (slow process) – both from death to life**
- The critical thing is not being able to mark the precise moment, but to know that you have life now.
- 1 Peter 2:2 – one sign is that you love the Scriptures.
- It is part of the larger cosmic regeneration that will climax in the new creation.

B. Regeneration comes through the gospel

- See **1 Pet 1:23**
 - *Luther (studying Romans), Wesley (Commentary),*
 - *Not A Book on the Shelf- Explosion*
 - *Whitefield preached on the new birth thousands of times*
- 2 Cor. 5:17 – Think, feel, love

C. Regeneration is God’s work of mercy

- We don’t deserve it.
- Ephesians 2:4, “God rich in mercy, made us a live together with Christ.”

D. Regeneration is related to the resurrection of Jesus and you obtain a true, living hope.

- Made possible through death and resurrection.
- Not even death will take away this hope.
- **United in Him. “Raised with Christ”** (Eph. 2; Col 3)
- **We share in his resurrection victory!**

Living Hope

- “**Hope**” is only mentioned five times in the book but it underlines the tone of the letter.
- **Mercy brings this new birth, and this new birth brings a bright future ahead, which the following verses unfold.**
- **Being future oriented is basic to Christian living, and is especially important in suffering.**
- Hope is powerful for enduring –
- **Kids that won’t eat until the promise of desert is brought up.**
- **We have a future eternal hope that empowers us to live today.**
- **Less than 24 hours before Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazi’s, he was asked to lead a worship service for prisoners – a week after Easter. He took as his text Isaiah 53:5 (by his wounds you are healed) and 1 Peter 1:3, born against to a living hope.” This is the end, but for me, the beginning of life.**
- **That’s a man who believed this verse.**
- **If you knew you were about to be executed, what passage would you meditate on?**
- **Christians are not characterized as being people of hope.**

#2: Inheritance (1:4)

Peter now highlights the believers’ “inheritance,” that is, their portion in the new creation with all its blessings. .

We have a **new inheritance**, like the promised land in the Old Testament, only greater.

- We have an eschatological hope (2 Peter 3:11-13)
- Something glorious is in store for Christians!
- Hebrews 11 – the saints longed for a heavenly country and city.
- That Promised Land inspired faithfulness; and the new promised land does the same for us as well.
- We will inherit the earth; the promise land is a type a shadow of the new creation to come.

3 Adjectives

Imperishable – never destroyed; the land of Israel has a history of war and ravaged.

- This word is only eternal realities such as God himself, God’s Word, our resurrection bodies.
- In contrast, earthly possessions will decay and be destroyed, for the creation is now in bondage to decay (Rom 8.21)

Undeiled – clean; the land was defiled before Israel entered; and was later defiled by idolatry.

- New creation will be unpolluted by sin and corruption.

Unfading – it won’t spoil/ diminish

- **It’s not like some of your guys’ hairline – the glory departing! But’s okay you’ll get some new hair!**
- It won’t fade like wealth will fade.
- New creation will never lose its glory.
- It’s not like milk; it won’t spoil.

Guarantee of our Assurance – **Kept in heaven for you**

- *God has reserved it for you.*
- **Have you ever got on a plane and found that someone is in your seat? I mean, it’s a reserved seat for you. How about a ball game ticket... someone is there in your seat**
- **Worse yet, is when you book a hotel room, and you arrive to find out they gave your reserved room away! They’re like, “I’m sorry, what’s your name?”**
- Well it’s not that with glory! God is keeping your spot reserved for you.

If you set your mind on the new creation to come, on the fact that you will be with the Lord Jesus forever, what kind of difference will that make? It has all kinds of ramifications.

- You can sleep at night.
- You won’t feel like you want to grasp everything in this life.
- You can love people (Col 1:4-5)
- You don’t fear death.
- Revelation 5 – a vision of our future – and Jesus who alone is worthy to open the scrolls;. He alone is pure; without blemish. Jesus, the undeiled one.

- Through him alone are we able to enter into God's presence and receive this inheritance.
- Imagine the hope this would have given the original hearers!
- This is not our home – we are headed somewhere else!

#3: Protection (1:5)

⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

"The inheritance is kept for us; and we are kept for us"

Military language for guarding. God is protecting us.

By **God's Power**

How confident can we be? No one is more powerful than God!

God is **guarding** us. We have a new security.

- No disease, disorder, or death itself can threaten God's powerful protection.
- *God Keeps Us*: I can't hold on, Jesus holds you; I can't endure, Jesus carries you; He sustains you by his power. (cf., Phil. 1:6; Phil. 2:12)
- *We need to be guarded in order to enjoy this future inheritance.*
- **Our Adoption of kids – forever? Our Father keeps us**
- Is anything as sweet as knowing you are kept by the power of God?
- Nothing shall separated us from his love.
- We are safe.
- **Our greatest security is not in the economy; or our abilities or family – our ultimate security is found in God.**
- The opposite is true: you are not safe if you are not in Christ.

The Father will protect all who belong to Jesus.

- **John 6:37**: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."
- **John 6:39**: "I should lose nothing of all that he has given me"
- **John 6:44**: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."
- The clarity of that is glorious – he will raise you up!

Through faith

Protected from what?

- It's **not** a protection from suffering.
- It's **not** protecting from persecution.
- It's **not** a protection from death – Peter would be martyred.
- He will uphold **your faith** in him.
- He keeps you **believing and trusting** – until that **day comes.**

- Those who abandon it never really had it.
- Those who have real saving faith are kept by God's power.
- It's not a promise of perfect faith, but enduring faith.

For a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time

- The “**last time,**” that is, the final stage of redemptive history, when Christ will return to bless and to judge.
- The focus here is on the blessing of Christ's return: the not-yet part of salvation.
- We are protected for this!

- Then we will feel more at home than we've ever felt before.

I pray that when you are on your dying breath you will remember these words “we are kept by the power of God”