

The Christian Walk

by Charles Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the believer's unique position in the world, their election by God, and their inheritance in heaven, and encourages them to trust in God's sovereignty and goodness in the face of trials and tribulations.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by introducing the letter of 1 Peter as a practical guide for living a holy and loving Christian life. He emphasizes the importance of reflecting on the facts of salvation and remembering who we are as sons and daughters of the King of Kings. The speaker then highlights the temporary nature of trials and encourages listeners to recognize the purpose and result of these trials, which is the perfection and purification of their faith. Finally, he mentions the reward of a victorious faith, which is being found to the praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Again, this morning we are going to press on a little farther in our reflections on the first chapter of 1 Peter. I had no aspirations to cover the entire epistle in a few short studies, but thought perhaps if we could just get the setting or the mind of the Apostle as he wrote and his objective, we might better understand the rest of the epistle in our private studies and reading. Yesterday morning, I sought to show you how when Peter addressed himself in this letter to those who would receive it, he wanted to establish, I think, first of all, the providential position in which they found themselves, lest they should be in question about whether or not they ought to be in some other location.

He makes it very clear that God has placed them where they are, and the purpose for that location is that there they might be a communicator, a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's exactly what our position is in the world. Wherever the Lord has placed us is part of his providential plan for our lives, and it's great to recognize that and be reconciled to it no matter where it is, and then to also recognize that through you God wants to communicate his message and his life to others. So, Peter addresses himself to these who are strangers scattered abroad, as the title he gives them, but the next thing he seeks to do is to establish in their minds their unique position in the world, unique because of God's activity on their behalf, and so he talks about in the second verse of chapter one the fact that these are the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, then addresses them, grace to you and peace be multiplied.

We must not forget that the peoples, the early Christians in the Roman Empire, were slaves for the most part. Ancient historians tell us that possibly 95 percent of the population of the Roman Empire were captured peoples. They had been captured by the Roman legions, and were under the vassalage of Rome.

They were slaves, they were owned body, soul, and spirit, and since there were no laws, or very few laws, that governed the conduct of a slave owner toward his cattle, his slave, you can well imagine what society was like when you could purchase a woman or a man for much cheaper than it would cost you to buy an animal, and then you had the privilege or the right to use them any way you wished. If you cared to beat them to death, none would say you nay. If you wanted to starve them, you could do that.

You could misuse them and abuse them, and they had no recourse to law, so that life was a hard lot for those who were slaves. Add to that the fact that many of these slaves had now found faith and hope in the gospel, the message of salvation, and because they were now marked out as special people, and later on labeled as enemies of the Roman Empire, you can well imagine what the lot of the early Christian was like. Very difficult to live for Christ, and there would have been a great tendency to denigrate oneself, feel that I'm nobody, I'm a nothing, I am a cattle, I'm worthless, and so it would be a depressing kind of thing.

Therefore, you find in most of the epistles, the note of victory is struck, reminding the Christian that he or she are unique, they're special, they're the objects of God's special concern, and this is true here. The readers of this epistle now are reminded that the entire trinity has been at work on their behalf. God the Father has selected them, elected them from among all other men.

They are chosen, specially chosen of God. Now, again, I say that great doctrine of election has been a source of theological controversy for a long time, and I don't imagine that it will be solved totally in the near future, but the fact still remains, whether we can explain it or not, that we who are saved have been elected by God unto salvation. Now, I know that that raises a lot of questions in our minds, but the facts, I repeat it, the fact remains that from among all mankind, according to his foreknowledge, God has elected some to be set aside for the special work of the Holy Spirit, whose ultimate objective is to lead that object, that person, to faith and obedience in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the formula which is here outlined for us. We have been selected, elected by God to become the special objects of the Holy Spirit's work, so Peter says, through sanctification of the Spirit. Now, sanctification merely means setting something aside or putting it apart from something else for a special purpose, as if I should take a coin from one pocket and put it in another pocket because I'm going to use that coin for some specific purpose, then that coin is sanctified.

That doesn't mean it's made intrinsically holy. That doesn't mean that there's been any special work done that makes the metal of that coin different. It is the specific purpose for which it is set aside that we can call it sanctified.

So, in the Old Testament, there were vessels even in the house of the Lord in the tabernacle that were called sanctified vessels. That means they were set aside for a holy purpose, for a specific objective, and so the Holy Spirit has a work which we may call a pre-salvation sanctification, just as there is a post-salvation sanctification, and that's quite a different work. The post-salvation, that is after salvation, sanctification of the Holy Spirit has to do with our perfection, our constant being made Christ-like, set apart from unholiness, unrighteousness, the work of the Holy Spirit in us, bringing us closer and closer to the image of the Lord Jesus.

That's the post-salvation sanctification work of the Spirit, but the pre-salvation sanctification work of the Spirit is that work which the Holy Spirit does in trying to bring, or attempting to bring, a sinner who is estranged from God to the place of obedience and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he uses many means in which to do that. It may be the uncomfortable feeling that some people have when they get into an evangelistic type of meeting, and an invitation is given to come to Christ. They, so to speak, they sweat it out.

They're struggling. They can't take that invitation part. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is pressing the claims of Christ upon conscience, and mind, or heart.

It may be the gospel practice enclosed by a friend or somebody interested that falls out of the envelope and is a reminder of God. That's the pre-salvation sanctification of the Holy Spirit. He's at work setting the sinner aside in order that he might bring him to faith in Christ.

It may be the chance gospel radio program, might be at the funeral service of a friend or a loved one. I remember one funeral service I had once that shocked the people. I don't know why I said what I did at the time, but I said, in a moment you'll have a chance, all of you, to come up and look for the last time upon the features of this departed person.

Let me just say to some of you, take a good look. This man was a born-again Christian. He's going to be in heaven.

This will be the last time you'll ever see his features, ever, because some of you are going to hell, and you won't see him there. Boy, that'll sober up a funeral service, you know, and you should see how folks slide up to the coffin after that very carefully. But it is true a funeral service may be the place where the Holy Spirit does his work, maybe on the operation table or in the serious illness or in the moment of an accident, but in some way the Holy Spirit of God in his pre-salvation work operates in the life and upon the heart of the sinner to bring him to one position, obedience and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, if Peter says this is what's happened in your case, you who received this letter, therefore you are unique, you're set apart, you're separate, you're special, what a difference it would make if we were aware of these glorious facts all the time. Some years ago, I was in Central Africa, up in the Central African Republic, I think it was, and it was up along the Ubangi River, the Ubangi-Shari district. There I saw for the first time, really in the raw, these ladies who have the big lips, you know, the discs.

You've seen them in circuses, maybe, and there right out in the open you'd see women with the discs in their bottom lips that were 12 inches in diameter on the bottom lip and eight inches on the upper lip. When you get the two of them together, that's quite a mouthful, let me say, and they are, of course, distorted. It's not a mark of beauty, but I learned why they did that.

You see, when the girl baby was born, the mother would take a little shark instrument and pierce the lower lip of the baby and the upper lip, make a hole in it, much as ladies do when they pierce their ears, and then the mother would insert a little twig in that open hole, and as the baby developed, it would heal, and then when it was healed, she would pull that twig out and insert a larger one and keep that up, making it bigger and bigger and bigger until the lips were so stretched that it was possible to insert in the lips these wide wooden discs. And I inquired, and I said, why do you do that? What's the point of it? You don't seem to think it's a mark of beauty. They have some strange ideas as to what's beautiful in some of the tribes of

Africa.

We wouldn't call it beautiful, some of the things they do, but this is not done to beautify women. In fact, it mars them. So, they told me this story.

They said, well, you see, the Arab slave traders used to come up here, come into our country, and carry off our women and our men, too, and take them down to the coast and sell them off as human slaves. And so, we decided that we would disfigure our women so that they would not capture them or take them, and it was true that they discarded women who were so disfigured, they thought, by these discs. Well, with that thought in mind, I came on down to Lagos in Nigeria, and I spoke in a cathedral, black cathedral there, and the bishop afterward told me some stories.

He said right out in this churchyard is where they had a huge wooden block, and where they used to bring these slaves down from Central Africa, and they would sell them, auction them off, and they would put them on the boats out there in the harbor, and ship them off to England and to America. It was a shameful episode, and terrible story, and I felt ashamed to listen to it. But, then he told me another story.

He said one day, when they came down with a large number of these captured people, chained or roped ankle to ankle, he said there was one big African, huge, generally Africans are not tall, they are somewhat shorter than other people for the most part, with some exceptions to be sure, but this man was a big tall black man, well over six feet, husky, barrel-chested, magnificent physical specimen, and when he sweated, and the sun shone upon that black skin of his, wet with his perspiration, it looked as though he was clothed in black velvet. He was such a magnificent specimen, that when those auctioneers saw that man, they drooled. He would bring a mighty big price, and he said, one of the auctioneers said, who is that man? Who is that one right there, that big one? And, the Arab slave trader looked at him and said, oh he, he's the son of a king, and he never lets himself forget it.

Listen to me, you and I are sons and daughters of the king of kings. Don't you ever let yourself forget that, not for a minute. You are the one whom God the Father elected to be his own child.

You are a person whom the Holy Spirit spent energy upon your life, bringing you eventually to the place where you put your faith and obedience in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that makes you special, different, unique, separated from everybody else. That's what you are. Peter says, that's what you are.

Not only are you a place where God put you, but you're special because of who you are to God. Thou, grace and peace be multiplied unto you. That's not the end, of course.

He goes on to say, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word he uses there is eulogos, from which we get our word eulogy. We speak well of somebody, speak well of God the Father, glorify him, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Not only are you special because of what God has done for you, but listen, you have a special hope, a living hope, which is guaranteed to you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and, if faded not away, reserved in heaven for you. That's not the end of the sentence, but we'll stop there.

Inheritance. I don't dare look up and ask you this question, but have you ever been an heir to anything? Anybody ever leave you something? I used to dream about a special knock on the door when somebody

would stand there and say, this came to bring you good news. You have just inherited ten million dollars.

I can dream, can't I? Well, when I was a boy, I was raised in a, I think I mentioned here, an unconverted home. My forebears are Scandinavian. They come from Sweden, and my father used to tell us when we were kids, and we lived in a very poor home, very poor.

I often say the reason I have such a bruised personality, and I am so lopsided in my psychology, is because I lived in a poverty-stricken home in a ghetto. Now, I didn't know what the word ghetto meant, but that's where we lived in the time when we lived. It was a Polish ghetto, all Polish people.

We didn't call them Polish, we called them Polaks, and they didn't mind. That was all right for them. My best friends were Polaks.

We beat each other up. We had street gangs. It was great.

It was fun. That's the way I was raised. Now, according to modern psychology, I should be in a booby hatch, or some strange, peculiar creature I should be, but anyway, maybe this is what kept me alive.

My father used to say, you have a rich uncle over in Sweden, in Gothenburg, Sweden. He's very rich. Now, to a boy some seven, eight, nine years old, long about there, that uncle got richer by the day, until he owned half of Sweden, in my thinking, and when we would get letters from overseas with a mark, you know, a stamp from Sweden, I used to hope.

You know what I mean? I was like a friend of mine who got up in prayer meeting one night and said, will you please pray for my mother-in-law? She's very sick. Pray that she'll get better, or something. Well, I used to think maybe my uncle, or something, but in my time, I want to tell you, I have spent millions, millions and millions of dollars.

I once owned 18 houses all at one time. I don't know how many automobiles I own. I had a yacht.

I don't know how to spell it, but I had one, and then I got tired of all these houses I bought, so I decided to build one of my own, and it was a house. Let me tell you, I did, I built all kinds of things into it, but when you had all the money I had, you know, you could do anything you pleased, especially the bathroom. I remember, well, no, my bedroom had a closet, I remember, and every time I opened the closet door, a wave of pennies would knock me down right to the floor.

I couldn't think of anything more marvelous than swimming through a sea of pennies. If it were today, I'd raise that to quarters, but at any rate, there it was. I never figured out who put those pennies back, but when you were as rich as I was, it didn't make any difference, and then I built a bathroom.

It was something special. It was a chocolate bath tub, and I filled it with soda water, and I took my bath and drank the water and ate the tub, and you may say, what a strange brat you must have been. Well, what would you have done if you were heir to millions and millions of dollars? Probably just as silly things as I did, and then one terrible, awful day, my father had to admit that it was all a fairy story.

There was no rich uncle, there was no inheritance, there was no fortune coming. I wasn't an heir to anything. That was as bad a day as the day I learned there was no Santa Claus, but no uncle, no inheritance.

I was deceived, so I went back to my ordinary, normal living until one day when I came to Calvary's Cross, I learned something marvelous that I was brought into a family, the very family of God, and one of the first fruits of that relationship was that I was an heir to an incorruptible inheritance that was reserved in heaven for me, and I am kept for it forever by the mighty power of God, and that's not a fairy story. That's the truth. That is the truth.

We have a glorious inheritance in heaven. Now, by now, wouldn't you think that these readers of this epistle are feeling a little better about themselves up to this point? In case they were down a bit, and they must have been because of the trials they were already experiencing, they must have been feeling a lot better now. So, he says, you are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

You don't understand all that's involved yet in your salvation. Its fullest revelation hasn't come to you yet. It's reserved, going to be revealed in the last time, but for the time being wherein in it, in this salvation, you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

Now, I want to make something fairly clear. I don't think that Peter is here talking when he talks about sufferings and trials in this epistle. I don't think he's referring to the ordinary commonplace trials that all of us face.

You know, we all have troubles of one kind or another. I heard a preacher say not long ago, my friend, if this morning you don't have troubles, you're in trouble. Well, we all have troubles of one kind that come to us.

Some are just the normal, natural consequences of being alive. I've got a good friend from South Africa. He says that they have a saying down there, when life gets very tough, some of those Afrikaans people, they say, oh, it's mighty tough being a people.

It is mighty tough sometimes just being a people, just being alive, and I don't think that Peter is here addressing himself to these temptations, these trials, the common things of life. He directs himself more pointedly and particularly at trials that come as a result of our fidelity to our faith, because we are Christians, because we are believers, and in this instance he's not unmindful of the fact that they have many testings, and they're in heaviness because of this, if need be. But now he says, let me say a word about the trial of your faith.

Notice again the emphasis, trial of your faith. I'm, again, I think he's talking about the trials that come that would try our faith in God, especially as we are mistreated by those who do not believe. The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Now, actually, he's presenting a paradox here. He's saying they're singing with heavy hearts, and that's true. Christian believers are a paradox to the world.

They don't understand when believers in Christ can live victoriously in the midst of intense trial and difficulty. The world doesn't quite decipher that. They don't understand that.

There's a travel agent lady down in Boca Raton that I've dealt with in our travels, and one day I had an opportunity to witness to her about Christ, and I tried to tell her something about missionary activity. She's a traveler. She travels around the world, and I tried to tell her about missionaries.

I don't think she'd ever met a missionary in her life anywhere in her travels. She always travels first class, goes to the best hotels, travels in high style, and that is not normally where missionaries travel, you know. So, her concept of missionaries was a very odd concept, and when I tried to talk to her about flesh-and-blood people who are doing some unbelievably remarkable things among primitive peoples who are turning their backs upon many of the pleasures and the comforts of life, and doing it because they love Jesus Christ, and they learn to love the people, this woman was totally perplexed.

She would not, could not believe that our world had such people in it, and when I talked to her about some of them who have suffered persecution, and some who have even died for Christ's sake, I was in another world, in another universe, as far as she was concerned. Our world doesn't understand the Christian believer, and when a Christian sings, though he has a heavy heart, when he rejoices even in the midst of his trials, this perplexes the ungodly. They don't understand that at all, and Peter says you want to, in the midst of your trouble, in the midst of all of your trials, there are some things that that can bring comfort and strength to you, and they are as follows.

First, reflect on the facts of your salvation. No matter how tough life gets, no matter how hard and bitter the opposition, remember who you are, what God has done for you. Reflect on the facts of your salvation.

Then remember, secondly, the transiency of trial. Notice he says that it is only for a season. You greatly rejoice, though now for a season the trials are only for a little time.

They'll pass, and then you must recognize the purpose and the result of your trials. The purpose is the perfection and purification of your faith, and the reward of faith that is victorious is magnificent. It means that we will be found to the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

What a moment that's going to be! Do you ever stop to think of what it's going to be like when your name is called? You always sing it so lustily, when the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there. I know, so will I, but I wonder what it's going to be like when my name is called, and I have to step out, step out of the whole vast hordes of heaven, and for one moment the spotlight is on me, and I have to face my Savior there to be examined for my faith and my faithfulness. I wonder how many people there will be in that blood-washed throng that will call out, Anderson, thank you for being so faithful and witnessing to me.

Thank you, brother. How many will be calling out from that crowd, thank God that you came my way, and you witnessed for me, you showed me Christ, or will there be dead silence, not a soul to cry out from that crowd in gratitude because you passed their way? Oh, in that moment we want our faith, though it has been perfected and tried by the fires of persecution, to be found to the praise and honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom having not seen we love, in whom though now we see him not yet believing, we rejoice with a joy that's unspeakable and full of glory, writes Peter. Now he says another thing, and I will just kind of conclude with this this morning.

A rather odd verse, verse 9, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. I haven't had opportunity to check this against some other translations, but let me point something out to you here in the King James Version. You know that whenever you find in the King James Version italicized words, they are words that have been inserted to fill out the sense in English, so it flows with a nice flow.

You will not find an equivalent word in the original language for it, so the translators just filled in some words, and they are generally marked by italics. Now, if you read this verse omitting the italicized words, notice how it reads, receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of souls. That's a little twist on it, isn't it?

What is the end, the objective of a faith that is tried, tested, and proven to be genuine? What will it issue in? It will issue in the conviction of unbelieving people that what you hold and what you believe is real, and it may lead to their salvation.

So, maybe Peter is saying one of the blessed results of a faith that is put to the fiery test. Your faith, you readers of my epistle, you special people rejoicing even in the midst of hot trials, realizing that in the end your objective is to bring praise and honor and glory to the Lord Jesus, but meanwhile such a faith put to such a test will result in the salvation of souls. Other people will come to know that Christ is and can be just as real to them as he is to you.

If that be one of the blessed immediate fruits of a tested faith, then ought we not to thank God for the tests and the trials that come to us? If it issues in somebody else's salvation, it ought to make us rejoice in that fact. Now, really, all that I've said up to this point is kind of introductory to this letter. This is like my friend who wrote two pages to me, and the whole first page or so is full of blessed, wonderful, preliminary truth before he gets down to talking about the facts that he wants to say in the letter.

Peter is eventually going to get around to some pretty practical stuff for these people. All of this is great, all of this is wonderful, all of this is real, but it issues in practical things, practical holiness, practical love one for the other, a practical kind of Christian life that portrays Christ. He's going to come around to that, and we'll have to wait until we have some time to come around to it, too.

So, let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank thee this morning for that great grace of God that found us out amongst all the multiplied millions of earth that thou should set thy love upon us, and select us, and then elect us to be a member of thy family, and then to subject us to the blessed work of the Holy Spirit, who by his strivings and wrestlings brought us to the place not only of conviction of sin, but to obedience and submission to the sprinkling of the blood of the Lord Jesus, and then brought us by the new birth into thy family, gave us an inheritance that's kept for us, and we're kept for it. Lord, if by any chance we are experiencing any kind of opposition for thee, and for our faith in thee, forgive us for any complaints that may have come from our lips, or any rebellion that may have been fostered in our hearts.

Bring us to the place where we welcome whatever God in his provident sends to us, yea, even the testing of our faith, if it shall in the end bring honor and glory to the one whom we love, and if it will also bring others to Christ, then bring it. Lord bless us today. Help us to walk with thee.

Make us aware of thy presence in every experience of this day. We ask it for thy namesake. Amen.

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