

Thanks to God who had Begotten us Again

1 Peter 1:1–7

Turn to 1 Peter 1 please. In the two months before our covenant Sunday, we will have three messages on our salvation. We had one on Romans 8: nothing separates us from God's love. Today we'll go through to 1 Peter 1: thanks to God who has begotten us again. Later we'll cover Ephesians 1. When the apostles describe our salvation, it is powerful and rich. As time goes on, what God has done for us gets dumbed down in our own minds. So these messages are a refresher on what God has done for us

This is thanksgiving Sunday. Traditionally that's about food and crops, and I am all for that. But in the New Testament, thanks to God is usually for how he rescued us and made us his people. God provided salvation.

Our text today divides into two sections. First Peter opens the letter, and then beginning in v3 he thanks God. Let's read 1 Peter 1:1-2, the opening.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Peter follows the letter practise of the day, which named the letter's sender, then the receiver, and a blessing. Peter describes himself quite briefly, and his blessing is brief as well. But Peter uses about five times as many words to describe his readers, which now includes us. In Peter's day, as ours, we lose sight of who we are to God. So Peter says this to encourage them, and God wants to encourage you and me today with these words.

1 God Knew us and Chose us long ago, though we are Scattered Foreigners on Earth.

Followers of Christ are not usually prized on earth. They weren't then, and we aren't now. "But listen," says Peter, "God knew you and chose you long ago." The way God knows us now, he somehow had far in advance. Knowing us and choosing us are bound up together back there. He knew what he was getting, and he chose us.

In the world, we are kind of a scattered nuisance. To God, we are the choice ones, the selects. All humans are his, but we are his treasure. He has taken us for his inheritance. Peter's readers were not being well treated by the world. Peter agreed. But, says Peter, remember who you are to God. Every one of you individually was a part of God's ancient holy plan. To God we are his chosen ones, his treasure.

2 Set Apart for God by the Holy Spirit (1:2)

The Spirit sanctified us. This gets translated different ways: sanctified, consecrated, made holy. The core sense of being made holy is that we are separated from others and become God's possession. That makes us holy. Long ago God knew us and chose us. But in our lifetime, at some point the Holy Spirit set us apart for God. That's what God chose us for, and it has happened.

Usually, from our side of this, we chose God. We decided to move toward God, toward Christ. Peter says, "no, that's not what really happened. The Holy Spirit came into your life and brought you to God." God knew us and chose us long ago, and in our lifetime the Spirit put God's plan into action.

3 Set Apart for Obedience and the Sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus (1:2)

Back in May of this year, we went through Exodus. Do you remember these words from Exodus 24? This is the only place in the Old Testament where blood gets sprinkled on all the people.

Israel has come out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, and now meets God at Mt. Sinai. Exodus 24:7–8 - *Then Moses took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."*

God had shown himself kind and faithful to Israel. How did they respond? *They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey."* At some level, when we come to the Lord, we have all said this. It is called repentance. Coming to the Lord means deciding to live in his ways. We now will do what the Lord Jesus said, we will obey.

Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." We agree to obey the Lord Jesus, and his blood becomes the sacrificial blood that's sprinkled on us. We don't actually get his blood sprinkled on us as they did. We drink it in a cup. But it means the same.

God is telling us that it is the same process to bring us into the new covenant. God knew us and chose us long ago, even though we are scattered foreigners on earth. In our life time, the Spirit acted on this. The Spirit set us apart for God by leading us to obedience and to the sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ. That's how the Spirit brought us to God.

Now let's read the rest of our text, the thanksgiving.

1 Peter 1:3–7 *Thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has begotten us again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

4 Thanks to God who in his Great Mercy has Begotten us Again (1:3)

The NIV says that “God has given us new birth.” It is actually a more direct phrase than that. Old English used the word “beget.” “Beget” referred particularly to what a father did with the mother to have children. Fathers beget their children. God has begotten us again.

Peter picks this up again later in verse 23. *God has begotten us again, not from perishable seed but from imperishable.* “Seed” in that line refers to the substance from his own body that a male puts in a female to bring conception, to create a new life. God has begotten us again, from imperishable seed. Our human fathers had perishable seed, so we die. But God has begotten us again, this time with imperishable seed. The Bible does not provide a mother figure for our second birth, but God is the Father and there is seed, and by this means we were begotten again.

That’s why I’m sticking with the older English “begotten,” as in “God has begotten us again.” There is no contemporary word that has quite the same sense. We are God’s birth children. Thanks to God who in his great mercy has begotten us again.

5 He has Begotten us Again into a Living Hope (1:3)

The New Testament often speaks this way. We weren’t saved for *this* life *now*, we were saved for *that* life *then*. What do we get when we are born again, when God begets us again with his imperishable seed? Hope! We didn’t have hope before, and now our lives are full of hope. “Living hope” because we wait for Christ, and he’s alive!

Romans 8:24–25 *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.* God will make everything new, including us. That is not an add-on to the Christian faith. It is not a door prize. Hope is the reason we were saved!

1 Corinthians 15:19 - *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.* [repeat] Following Christ was never intended to make sense just viewed as this life. Not even close. It is a big change of thinking to get our heads around this. The good news is that it was just as big for the harassed believers who first got Peter’s letter.

This was not how they thought. But God was speaking to them, and he speaks now to us, to show us how to handle our present trouble. We were born again into a living hope.

1 Peter 1:13 – *Put your hope in the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.* How do we get ready for spiritual action in this life? *Put your hope in the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.*

Hebrews 6:18 says that we who believe “*have fled from danger to take hold of the hope set before us.*” Is this your picture of your coming to Christ? What really happened, says Hebrews, is that you were fleeing from danger, and God set hope in front of you, so you could grab it and be saved. We were fleeing, and God stepped in and offered us hope.

In his great mercy, God has begotten us again into a living hope.

6 [Begotten Again] into an Inheritance that Never Gets Old (1:4)

You are begotten again also into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you.

God is our birth Father and we are his birth children. Parents like to give their children a good inheritance. In our case that’s probably not going to happen, but Marilyn and I would love to have lots to give our children. God is like that, and we’re his children. And there are no limits to what God can spend or what he can put together.

The people Peter wrote to would not inherit much from their parents, probably nothing at all. Worldwide, in our day, most of us do not inherit much from our parents either. But we do have an inheritance coming. It is already there with God in heaven. It is ready. It is safe. It never gets old. It is being kept for us.

The Bible cannot tell us what it will actually be like because we don’t have words for it. Human language cannot express it. Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, what it will be like.

Here’s a joke. A believing man was wealthy, and he was dying. He begged God for permission to bring some of his wealth into heaven with him. “OK,” said God, “one box.” So the man filled a sturdy box with gold. He died and met the Apostle Peter at the gate into heaven. The pearly gates. Peter said, “Sorry, you can’t bring that in.” “Yes,” said the man, “God said I could.” “Alright,” said Peter. “Can I see what you brought?” Peter looked into the box and was puzzled. “Gravel?” he said. “You brought gravel?” (streets of gold)

I don’t know what the God who begot us has waiting for us, but it will make the greatest inheritance on earth look like gravel.

7 Kept for you who are Shielded by God's Power (1:5)

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

God is keeping our inheritance for us, and he is keeping us for it. We are shielded by God's power, not to save us from troubles on earth, but shielded by God's power to make sure we'll be there to receive our inheritance.

When I read this part of 1 Peter, I picture God putting both of his mighty hands to work. One of his mighty hands holds onto the inheritance he has gotten ready for us. That hand is in heaven, with a firm grip on our inheritance. He's keeping that for us. God's other powerful hand is on you and me, and it holds onto to us. We are shielded by God's powerful hand until the coming of our salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. When the last time begins, when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming, then God's two hands come together, so that his children have their inheritance in his presence.

We trust in God, and he shields us by his power until final salvation arrives. Did you notice that in this line, "salvation" is still future? In the New Testament that is not unusual. It is not how we think about salvation, but it is one of the common ways that word is used in the New Testament. We shielded by God's power until final salvation arrives. Thank you, Father, thank you.

8 In This You Rejoice, Though for Little While you have Grief in Many Trials

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

We rejoice in these things, even though now for a little while we have distress in all kinds of trials, which have come to prove that our faith is genuine. If we endure, we will receive praise and glory and honour when Christ is revealed. We don't usually rejoice like this in our troubles. Peter's first readers were no better at that than we are. But God is telling us that if we could see the whole picture, we would surely rejoice.

9 The Two Times and Two Places of Faith: Thinking like a Christian

Being a Christian who thinks, and thinking like a Christian, are not the same. Christians who think have strong minds. Thinking like a Christian takes strong faith. Here's a part of thinking like a Christian.

The world around us has only one time, this present age, and only one place, this present world. The Bible tells us that we are tied to two places. We live here, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we wait for a saviour from *there*. *Here*, we are scattered strangers and foreigners, but *there* we are known and chosen, *there* we are God's treasure. Jesus told us to lay up our treasures in heaven. We live in *this* place, but our *loyalty* is to the other place. Our life here and now is guided by what we know about the other place, where God is.

And there is this time and the other time, which begins when the Lord returns. This age will end, on God's timing, and it will be violent. Paul tells the Thessalonians, "*you turned from idols to serve the living God and to wait for his Son Jesus, who saves us from the coming wrath.*" Each of us here has turned from some false worship to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son who saves us from the coming wrath.

This is why Hebrews said we fled from danger to take hold of the hope set before us. We fled the coming wrath. God guides our lives in this time by telling us about the End of this time and about the time to come. We live out our faith here with our eyes on the other place and the other time. That's thinking like a Christian.

10 Review

God knew us and chose us long ago, though now we are scattered foreigners on earth.

We were set apart for God by the Holy Spirit.

We were set apart for obedience to Jesus and the sprinkled blood of Jesus.

Thanks to God who in his great mercy has begotten us again.

He has begotten us again into a living hope.

He has begotten us again into an inheritance that never gets old, being kept for us in heaven.

Because of our faith, God is shielding us by his power for the salvation that is coming.

In this we rejoice, though for a little while we suffer grief in all kinds of trials, which prove that our faith is genuine. Amen.

PRAYER: God, thank you for coming after us like this. Thank you that you knew us and chose us long ago. Thank you for separating us for yourself. Thank you for the sprinkled blood of Jesus. Thank you for begetting us again, thank you that we are your seed, your birth children. Thank you for our inheritance that is kept for us. Thank you that right now we are shielded by your power. Thank you for living hope. May we not lose sight of these things. We are so glad to be yours. Amen.

BENEDICTION (DOXOLOGY): To him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.