

## A Portrait of Christ's Church

Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1990

### 1 Peter 1:1-21

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, (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: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: (7) That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (8) Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (9) Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (10) Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: (11) Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. (12) Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. (13) Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (14) As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: (15) But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; (16) Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (17) And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: (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, (21) Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*

Last week I brought you a message on this station, entitled: "A Portrait of Jesus Christ." The message today is: "A Portrait of Christ's Church." We had a portrait last week of

our Lord Jesus Christ from the Book of Revelation Chapter 1. Today, we are going to look at a portrait of His Church, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ and His people.

Turn with me to First Peter Chapter 1. Have you ever noticed that this epistle, written by the apostle Peter, is called the “General Epistle?” Do you know why it is called the “General Epistle?” It is called the general epistle because it is not addressed to any particular church. For example, like the epistle that Paul wrote to the church at Galatia, the church at Corinth, the church at Rome and other individuals and people.

He addressed a letter to Titus and Philemon. This First Peter is addressed to all believers in general. It is also said, (and I didn’t know this), but it is said that this is the oldest epistle of all. The books in the Bible are not set in order that they were written. This is not how they were compiled in the Bible. They say that First Peter is possibly the oldest, the first epistle ever written.

This First Chapter of First Peter, the apostle gives a beautiful portrait of the people of God, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This chapter tells who they are and what they have. This is an interesting, interesting, study. So, I want you to stay with me.

Take your Bible and mark these words that I will be giving you as Peter describes the Lord’s church, the portrait of Christ’s church. In verse 1, Peter calls them “*Strangers.*” Do you see it there, “*To the strangers scattered throughout the world?*” God’s people are strangers?

They are not strangers to God. He said, “*I know My sheep. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning.*” He knows His sheep.

They are not strangers to one another. People of God love one another. They are one body in Christ and they are the body of Christ. They are the family of God and the people of God. So, they are not strangers to one another; they love one another. They love to fellowship with one another.

What does this mean when Peter calls them strangers? Well, there are strangers in this world and there are strangers to this world. You see; “*They are a holy people. They are a peculiar people.*” They are people who believe God and walk with God. The world hates them. The world hates God’s people like they hated Christ when He walked this earth in human flesh. He said, “*Marvel not my brethren that the world hate you. The world hated Me and it will hate you. If you were of the world, then the world would love*

*its own. Because you are not of the world, but I have called you out of the world, the world will hate you.*” You will be a stranger.

Some of you have experienced this. You have experienced this where you work and they consider you to be an “oddball,” a strange person. You can shop in the community in which you live and if you don’t take part of all the things that other people take part in and seem to enjoy, you are different. You are different because you are a stranger. You are in a strange land. This world is not your home. Like Abraham, you are looking for a city. You are a stranger now and you will always be a stranger if you walk with Christ.

All right, notice the second word in verse 2. Peter says, *“They are not only strangers, but they are the elect of God.”* Do you see the word “elect?” I want you to underscore it. It says, *“Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God,”* (or foreordination of God). God knows something before hand because He ordains it. They are the elect according to the foreordination of God. He said, *“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,”* elected of God, eternally loved and chosen of God.

Look at those four things that He says in verse 2, He says; *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”* The Holy Spirit sets them apart and comes to them and quickens them. He regenerates them and sets them apart from the world to obedience and to belief of the truth. They obey the Lord of Glory; they obey His voice and respond. The blood of Christ sprinkles them; they are cleansed by His blood atonement.

This refers back to the Old Testament mercy seat. The great high priest would bring the blood into the mercy seat and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat and would make atonement for the soul. These elect people are sprinkled and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. They are strangers in a foreign land, in a world that despises them. They are the elect of God. They are a special people chosen and ordained of God. *“Whom He foreknew, He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Whom He predestinated, He called. Whom He called, He justified. Who He justified, He glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us?”*

Peter goes on painting a portrait of God’s people. In verse 3 He says, they are born again. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* You know what it means to be begotten? It is to give birth to. *“He hath begotten us again, to a living hope.”* The first time we were born, we were born of the flesh. We were born in sin and born dead to God. We were *“dead in*

*trespasses and sins*” and *“brought forth from the womb speaking lies.”* By God’s mercy, according to His abundant mercy, and by His Spirit, the elect have been begotten again. This time, it is not a birth without hope, (as the flesh is because it has no hope). It is not a birth unto darkness and death and sin. *“He hath begotten us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

Just as our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead, we are quickened from the dead and made to live eternally. Christ says, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”* He lives to God. So, God’s people are strangers. They are the elect and they are born again.

Look at verse 4: *“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”* He says here, they are rich. They are heirs of God. You know what an inheritance is, don’t you? You probably have an uncle or a father, or a mother, who have passed away and left you an inheritance. They made you an heir. You’ve received riches in their will. It says here, He hath begotten us, the children of God, *“To an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven waiting for you.”* Oh, God’s people are heirs of God.

What is this inheritance? This inheritance is the very kingdom of God with all of its glories, riches, joys, happiness and eternal life. Believers are heirs of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Testator. It is His Will and Testament. He died on the cross and made us heirs of God. You know; it will never be contested either. That Will and Testament won’t ever be contested because He ever lives to make sure that what He left His people, they receive.

This inheritance is an incorruptible inheritance; it is eternal. It is undefiled by sin and untouched by sin. Everything that has been touched by sin will be destroyed. There will be *“a new heaven and a new earth”*. The old heaven and the old earth will be destroyed. This inheritance that is awaiting us is undefiled and *“It fadeth not away.”* Everything we see and touch here on the earth is fading away. *“This inheritance fadeth not away and is reserved; it is kept in heaven for you.”*

Well, let’s go on to verse 5: Peter says that these people are people who are a kept people. They aren’t just strangers, elect and heirs of God; they are born again and kept. What is something that is kept? It is something that is preserved. It is secure. *“We are kept by the power of God.”* We are kept by the power and the purpose of God and He is dedicated to keeping His people. *“We are kept by the power of God.”*

I preached on this not long ago. God's people do continue in the faith. They do persevere in the faith. The scripture says, *"We are kept by the power of God through faith."* I'm not saying without faith, but through faith. My friends, the credit and the glory for our preservation go to God. He keeps me; I don't keep myself.

I hear people say, "Keep the faith." Well, by His grace I will be kept through faith. Let's word this right. He says here, *"He hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith. Ready to be revealed in that last day."* Our Lord says in John 10: *"My sheep hear my voice and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No man can pluck them out of my hand; My Father gave them to me. No man plucks them out of My Father's hand because I and My Father are one."* Romans 8 declares; *"No one can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."*

Watch this in verse 6: *"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."* Peter says that these people of God are a tried people. They are a people who know something about trials, tribulations, sorrow, suffering and chastisement. God's people are a tried people. The way of God's people on earth is not an easy way., Christ said (watch this), *"In this world, you shall have tribulation, (trials) but be of good cheer; I have overcome this world."*

Many trials and sorrows come our way but always by the will of God. Trials are always for our good. He said this, *"All things work together for good to them who love God who are the called according to His purpose."* So, whatever trials, suffering and tribulation comes your way, they are ordained of God and they are for your good and His glory.

Notice verse 7, *"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."* This is the trying of your faith. Faith has to be tried. Untried faith is unproven faith. It may prove to not be real faith. You see; faith is tried to reveal the genuineness of it. That's right; God tries us to reveal the genuineness of faith, and to strengthen it. *"Trials produce patience and patience, experience, and experience hope. Hope maketh not ashamed."*

Faith is tried to reveal the value of it. Faith is tried to enable us to help others. I will tell you this, according to this verse, when faith is tried and when it proves to be genuine, it will bring glory to Christ at His appearing. Do you see that?

Look at verse 8: *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* Peter says that these people love Christ. The scripture says, *“Whom having not seen, you love.”* You haven't seen Christ but you love Him. We love the Father who chose us. We love the Son who redeemed us. We love the Holy Spirit who called us. Look at these three words here, *“Whom having not seen, you love.”* Peter said, *“Lord, you know I love you; you know all things.”* Paul said, *“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed.”* Then, they believe Him. He says, *“We believe.”* We love Him and we believe Him like Abraham of old. The last word is rejoice; *“We rejoice in Him.”* We rejoice in God our Saviour.

Do you see that portrait of the people of God? They are strangers in this world. They are the elect of God. They are a special, chosen people. They are born again and begotten again by His Spirit. They are heirs of God. *“They have an inheritance undefiled that fadeth not away.”* They are kept. *“They are kept by the power of God through faith.”* They are tried people but they are a people who love Christ and believe Christ. They rejoice in Christ.

In the next few verses, the apostle tells us what these people have. The word He uses is a word that you have heard so often. It is a word that is used over and over again. He uses the word *“salvation.”* They have salvation.

In verse 9, He says; *“Receiving the end of your faith, the goal of your faith, the results of your faith, even the salvation of your soul.”* Nobody knows a great deal about this subject of salvation. I hear a lot of people who talk as if they were authorities on it. I will tell you this, *“We know in part, we preach in part, we see through a glass dimly. But, when that which is perfect is come, we are going to know as we have been known.”* The apostle Peter deals with this thing of salvation. He tells us some things about this salvation. I will just pass these things onto you as I look at them here.

There is the portrait of the people of God and here is what they possess. In verse 9, *“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”* The end of your faith in Christ is the salvation of your soul. Watch what He says about this salvation. This salvation is by faith. The end of your faith is salvation.

It is not by works. What does the scripture say? *“For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”* In Romans 5:1, it says this; *“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul wrote the Third Chapter of Romans and said, *“Therefore, I conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”*

So, that is the first thing about this salvation, this glorious, grand salvation. It is by faith. *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”*

Notice the second thing in verse 10: *“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.”* This salvation is the same salvation that was enjoyed by Moses and Abraham, Jacob and David. King David *“was a man after God’s own heart.”*

This salvation that we have right now, this redemption, is the same. You hear us talking about the “great Moses and Abraham.” Do you remember Jacob and Isaiah? He said in verse 9 and verse 10, *“Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently into.”*

Who are these prophets? These prophets are Moses and others. Moses was a prophet of God. Christ said, *“Moses wrote of Me.”* There was Abraham, a great prophet and friend of God. Christ said, *“Abraham saw My day. He rejoiced to see My day. He saw it and was glad.”* David said, *“The Lord said unto My Lord, sit Thou on Thy right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”* Isaiah said, *“He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. By His stripes we are healed.”*

Everybody back yonder, Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Isaiah and David, were saved by looking to Christ coming to accomplish their salvation, by faith in Christ Jesus. They were looking by faith to Christ. Today, we look back to the Christ who came to save us. It is all in Him. Do you see that? This glorious salvation is by faith and it is the same salvation that the prophets of old rejoiced in.

Look at verse 11: *“Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”* This salvation is based on the sufferings of Christ. This is what Abel’s sacrifice pictured. Do you remember when Abel brought the Lamb and slew the Lamb and shed its blood? This is way back yonder after Adam fell; Abel was the son of Adam. He brought the lamb. That is what it shows, the sufferings of Christ.

Do you remember the Passover that was slain in Egypt when the blood was put on the door? That lamb was slain, that blood was shed. They roasted the lamb on the fire and ate the lamb. They put the blood on the door. That is the sufferings of Christ.

When the high priest went into the Holy of Holies and put the blood on the mercy seat, glory followed. They wrote about the sufferings of Christ. They looked to the sufferings

of Christ. They prophesied the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow His sufferings. In other words, He accomplished the redemption of God and secured the salvation of all His people. There are no more lambs slain.

You see, these Passover lambs and these sacrifices and animal blood could not put away sin, but Christ did. That's the glory that followed His death. His death was the one sacrifice, once for all that justified all of His people.

Now, verse 14: *“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.”* This salvation, this glorious salvation makes His people to be obedient children. He says, *“As obedient children,”* not walking as you walked before, not living as you lived before, not talking as you talked before. Read verse 15, *“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”* You see; our souls are justified by the sufferings of Christ and by faith and our faith in Christ. Our faith in Christ is justified by our obedience. Paul writes about the justification of the soul through the blood of Christ. James writes about our obedience of faith by works, and he says, *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”* We show our true faith by our obedience to Christ and works of faith.

Now, watch this, in verse 17, *“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”* This salvation begets into the people of God a fear, a godly reverence and true worship before the living God. My friends, when you read the Old Testament writings, the writings of men who knew God, remember that Abraham was called, *“the Friend of God.”* David was a man after God's own heart. When you read about these men of God in the Old Testament you will realize what is said about all of them; *“They feared the Lord.”* Jacob feared the Lord. Abraham feared the Lord. David said, *“Come my children and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”*

This is not a slavish fear. This is the fear from knowing the Majesty, power, glory and sovereignty of Almighty God. A man, who does not fear God, does not know God. That is how unbelievers are described in the Third Chapter of Romans in the New Testament. *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

Now, look at verse 18-21: *“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; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but*

*was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”*

This salvation is the gift of God through the merits of Christ who was ordained before the world to be our Redeemer but was revealed to us in these last days. You see, all that God purposed and all that God willed and all that God planed for His people was ordained before the world began. It was revealed by picture, promise, pattern and type in the Old Testament. Christ came and He accomplished it through His sufferings and His death and His blood. The glory of the gospel followed and down through these years all of it looks back to Christ's suffering and Christ's death and blood. One day, all of it will be manifested when God gathers His people together in one, in Christ.