



TITLE

SUBTITLE

1 PETER 1:1-12



LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY

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The same Holy Spirit, who spoke to these men, saw to it that the “Good News” of Jesus was announced to you, and the same Holy Spirit opened your ears to accept — the promised Messiah — as your Lord and Savior.



In the summer of 1997, after twelve years in space, the Russian space station MIR began to experience all kinds of problems. The crew of the space station, as well as scientists in the Moscow control center, knew they had to get the damaged equipment in working order as quickly as possible. After all, these men from planet earth could not survive in space without the artificial environment provided by the space station. They were only temporary residents in space. You can be sure that they never forgot that — not even for a split-second.

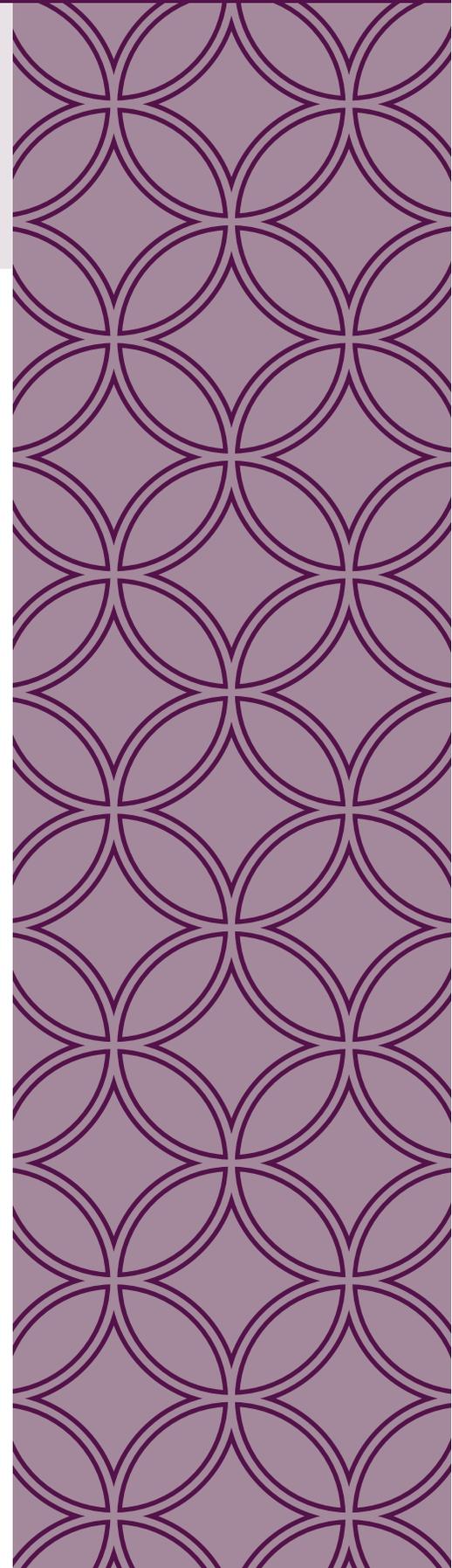
It’s kind of like that for Christians living on planet earth. We should never — not even for a moment — lose sight of the reality that as God’s chosen people we are truly aliens in a hostile world.

This is where the apostle Peter begins in his formulation of A Personal Mission Statement for the people to whom he wrote this epistle, as well as for us today. He reminds us all that we are people who are “out of our element” during our short sojourn on earth (See John 15:19).

HOW WE GOT TO BE PEOPLE OF GOD’S WORLD

1 PETER 1:1-3

In verse 2, Peter reminds us of the important truth of how we got to be “other-worldly” people. We “were chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.”



In this short statement, Peter summarizes how it all happened. It began with the Father's "choosing" us. But there is a lot more to it than that. In the beginning, God's created people sinned and disobeyed Him. Then, early in the history of His chosen people of the Old Testament, God introduced ceremonies which clearly demonstrated that it would take shedding of someone's blood before people could again enjoy a good relationship with Him. Before the High Priest could enter God's presence in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and later the temple, animals were killed on the altar of sacrifice. Only after the High Priest had sprinkled some of the blood over the people and upon himself did he move toward the place of God's Presence. All of this pointed to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross.

When Peter says here (v.2) that the Christians were "sprinkled" with the blood of Jesus Christ, he obviously doesn't mean this in a literal sense. They were sprinkled with His blood figuratively when they heard the Good News that God's Son had shed His sacred blood on the Cross on their behalf. The Holy Spirit then broke through the spiritual darkness in their hearts and led them to see that God had done all of this for them. They responded by opening their hearts to Him. The "bottom line" is that they had the Triune God to thank for their blessed relationship with Him. God had taken care of everything that needed to be done to make this possible. Basically, it was all His doing!

In this letter, Peter followed the customary format for formal correspondence. In the first verse, he identified himself and gave

his credentials. Next, he identified the persons to whom the letter was addressed, including a brief complimentary statement about them. He evidently felt that referring to them as "God's Chosen People" was the highest honor he could mention.

Next would come the greeting. In those days, among the Greeks the greeting was "Xaire!" or "Joy!" Instead of using the customary word, Peter used a similar sounding word "Xaris" or "Grace!" To make the greeting even more meaningful, he added the Greek translation of "Shalom!" — the greeting, which was commonly used by members of God's Old Testament people. "Shalom" (Peace) points to the idea of perfect spiritual soundness.

Peter's wish for them then was that this grace and peace would "be multiplied" — would be theirs in abundant supply. It was his wish for them that they would experience more and more of the exciting power of God in their lives! Nice touch! Can you think of a more fitting way for one Christian pilgrim to greet other pilgrims than to wish them increased spiritual power and blessing?

As Peter reflected for a moment upon what he had just told Silvanus to write, and before he gets into the body of his message for them, he just has to say how excited he is about all this. He invites his readers to join him. He says "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.3). If he were writing this today, he may have chosen to say "Let's hear it for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — three cheers to God for what He has done!"

First on his list of things for which to give God “three cheers” is the new life that they all have. “We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Peter is here referring to the new life which God in His great mercy gives to all who respond to the Gospel. Just as the life we receive from our parents comes to us without any action on our part, so this “new birth” is a result of what God has done — a gift from Him.

The birth puts us into a loving relationship with our heavenly Father, which is characterized by hope. In our time, people will often use the word hope interchangeably with the concept of “wishful thinking.” This is not what Peter means here by the word “hope.” He meant looking to the future with a well-founded expectation of great blessing.

This hope, Peter writes, gets its durability and dependability from the established fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It was the resurrection of Jesus that was responsible for Peter’s return from the hopelessness which overwhelmed him, after the crucifixion of Jesus. Here Peter seems to echo what his colleague Paul said in the great resurrection chapter of his correspondence to the Corinthians “If Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead!” (1 Corinthians 15:17ff). In Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead, believers are given the forward look to something we can count on.

WE ARE GUARANTEED A FANTASTIC RETIREMENT

1 PETER 1:4-5

As members of God’s family we can look forward to a fantastic “retirement” when our short stay on this earth is over. Peter’s language here seems to allude to Israel’s hope as they were being led through the wilderness by Moses. It was their hope

of an inheritance in the Promised Land that kept them going.

However, Peter points up a great contrast between such an inheritance and the inheritance he is talking about. He piles up three negative compounds. First, he says this inheritance is “imperishable.” In contrast to Canaan, it cannot be ravaged or polluted. Secondly, it is “undefiled.” The Greek word for this (*amiantus*) refers to a certain mineral found among the rocks which can be made into a fire-resisting fabric (maybe like asbestos). The fabric turned into pure white when placed into a fire. The Romans paid dearly for it. They wanted it for wrapping the remains of their dead so that in cremation the precious ashes would be preserved in a fabric that remained unaffected by the consuming fire. Thirdly, Peter says that it was “unfading.” The Greek term for this seems to be a reference to something with which Peter’s readers would be familiar. In his Lexicon of the Greek Language, Dr. Thayer tells us that the word is the same as the amaranth, a flower that never fades. When plucked off, if it is moistened with water it revives. Back in those days, says Dr. Thayer, “the amaranth plant was a symbol of perpetuity and immortality.”

Furthermore, Peter reminds them, this inheritance “is kept in heaven for you.” The verb form for the word “kept” happens to be the perfect participle, which implies completed action. It strongly suggests the idea that this is a “done deal.” It’s like a treasure which God has placed into a “heavenly safety deposit box,” the key for which God will put in your hands one day. This inheritance is a sure thing!

Not only is it secure, Peter says, there is also this neat feature: You can count on getting to heaven to claim it. As you and I remain in a faith relationship with God, we can enjoy it throughout eternity. You can count on Him.

WE CAN LIVE JOYFULLY, NO MATTER WHAT

1 PETER 1:6-9

Since we have so much “going for us,” Peter tells us, the overriding characteristic of our life is bound to be one of steady joy. He adds that this will be true, “though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials.” The language used here does not seem to point to any organized persecution. Peter is simply laying before them the difficulties they can expect to experience on a day-to-day basis, simply because they are Christians. Their unique outlook for the future as well as their set of values is going to put them “at odds” with the people around them. There will be open and sometimes subtle antagonism toward them and their way of life simply because they are different. It is inevitable. It comes with the territory. Nevertheless, Peter assures them, this is only for a “little while.”

Peter then goes on to instruct them how to put a “positive spin” on the difficulties they might encounter. He alludes to the way in which impurities are removed from gold by the heat of a fire. What remains after this process is a more beautiful genuine nugget of gold. Here, Peter encourages the believer to consider hardships they may experience as the occasions which will help to bring out the true wonder and beauty of their faith. It will not only survive the testing, but become even stronger and more beautiful. That purified faith will call forth the words of admiration and commendation from the Lord at His Second Coming.

Peter interrupts his train of thought to focus briefly on another facet of truth about the faith, which they already had. “Think of it,” he says, “You have never seen Him and yet you love Him; you don’t see Him now and yet you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.” He wanted them to recognize how much more valuable than gold is their faith. Gold can bring some blessings. But it’s nothing compared to blessings that faith can bring them. Their faith in the Lord Jesus brings present joy that you cannot find words adequate to describe. Peter also says that it is “exalted” joy, very likely intending for them to think of their joy as a hint of the glories to come.

Peter is on a roll. Not only does faith bring hope, love, and joy, ultimately it brings the best gift of all “the salvation of your souls.” The word “soul” is used here in the Semitic sense of “person” or “self.”

With all of the exuberance he can muster, Peter reminds them that they are special and privileged people. As people of faith, they have hope, they have joy, and they can begin to experience the blessedness of their future salvation already during their earthly sojourn.

BELIEVERS ARE MOST PRIVILEGED

1 PETER 1:10-12

In his effort to show them how special and unique they really were, Peter suggests that they take a look at the past. Think about the great prophets of the Old Testament, he says. They had the privilege of foretelling the details of God's plan of salvation and describing in detail various aspects of the Messiah's work of redemption. Yet it was all in the future for them. They hunted in vain for hints as to when and where all of this would take place. Somehow, they came to accept the fact that they were just the advance guard. What they had the privilege of knowing about and announcing would not happen in their time.

You are much more privileged, he told them. What these great servants of God could only dream about and write about, you are experiencing personally! The same Holy Spirit, who spoke to these men, saw to it that the "Good News" of Jesus was announced to you, and the same Holy Spirit opened your ears to accept — the promised Messiah — as your Lord and Savior.

If that were not enough to convince them how special they were, Peter takes it a step higher reminding them that in their faith they had something that not even the angels in heaven

can experience. These are "things into which angels long to look." The present tense suggests that they are continuing to try to see what the Christians are experiencing. Peter may have had in mind the reality that the angels of heaven are perfect beings. They know nothing of the agony and anguish of sin. So, they can't experience the wonderful Gospel of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life. They are limited to rejoicing over a lost sinner returning to God.

This wonderful section lays the foundation for everything else that Peter says later in this epistle.

As we go about our task of formulating our own "Personal Mission Statement," this is the place to begin. We start by affirming who we are and how we got this way. We are a most privileged people. We are members of God's Holy People — not because we are so good, but because He is so gracious. This is the basis for a radically different view of life, which might not always be understood or appreciated by unbelieving people with whom we share a comparatively short ride on planet earth.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 PETER 1:13-2:3

As I study Your Word today, Lord, help me to see clearly that You have not only called me by the Gospel and led me by the Holy Spirit to accept the salvation which Jesus has won for me with His sacrificial death, but You have also called me to a life of holiness and obedience. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

1 Peter 1:13-16

1. Take a few minutes to formulate for yourself a clearly stated "Personal Mission Statement" with two or three specific goals:

1.

2.

3.

2. What is the significance of the word "Therefore" with which Peter begins this section (v.13)?

Summarize in a personal way the main truths which Peter stated as the basis of his "Therefore." In v.1-13, Peter reminded me that...

3. In the light of what Peter's "Therefore" referred to, what is the first thing he challenged his readers to do?

Why this emphasis on using their minds?

4. What does Peter say can give us inspiration as we struggle to live a life of obedience to God?

Is Peter suggesting that our motive for obedience is our hope of getting to heaven when we die?

What would be wrong with that?

How can the sure hope of salvation help us?

5. Suppose you heard a Televangelist proclaim “Believe in Jesus and you will go to heaven. That’s all there is to it!” In the light of verse 14, is that all there is to being a Christian?

What else does God expect?

Tell how membership in a Christian congregation helps you grow in personal “holiness.”

Who is the model that we should seek to emulate in our “quest for holiness?”

1 Peter 1:17–21

6. What “attitude” does Peter say should dominate our lives as we seek to live for God, according to verse 17?

How can we reconcile this advice with what the Apostle John writes in 1 John 4:18?

If you are familiar with Luther’s Small Catechism, how does Martin Luther begin the explanation of each of the Ten Commandments?

7. With whose religious experience does Peter try to get his readers (and us) to identify in verses 18 & 19?

What event in the history of God’s Chosen People of the Old Testament does he want them to think about?

8. How does Peter (v.20) further seek to show his readers, of that time and now, the absolutely unbelievable magnitude of God’s love?

What does he say (v.21) that this thought should do for us?

1 Peter 1:22–25

9. In what area of our lives (v.22) will God be looking for us to come through with God-like behavior?

How does God’s example help us to clarify our understanding of what He means by love? (Romans 5:8)

In singling out the importance of love for brothers and sisters in Christ, was Peter implying that we are not expected to show love to non-Christians? How might you explain the absence of an all inclusive directive to love all people?

1 Peter 2:1–3

10. What does Peter recommend as an antidote or vaccine against attitudes and behaviors (2:1) that stifle and thwart our growth in holiness (v.2)?

What does Peter (v.3) point to as a way for us to nurture within our hearts a healthy and strong appetite for the Word?
