

A Study in 1 Peter 1:2–5

Elect — Sanctification of the Spirit — The Living Hope — The Inheritance Reserved — January 6, 2008

We are reading 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning at verse 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."

"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, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

The Character of 1 Peter — Wilderness Conditions

When Paul opens Ephesians with the same phrase — Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — he immediately goes to the heavenlies. The heavenly scene opens at once. But Peter's subject is different. Peter's epistle concerns the saints of God in their wilderness condition. God's government is now for these Jewish believers not collectively for the nation but individually — for their guidance, their support, and their correction on the wilderness journey. The thrust of the epistle is that we are down here, and everything is written for that situation.

In that sense it stands alongside the book of Hebrews, which is also written to Jewish believers viewed in wilderness conditions. In Hebrews we have boldness

to enter within the veil by the blood of Jesus — language of entering into the Most Holy Place, suited to pilgrims pressing in. In Ephesians we are already seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus — no entering needed, we are already there positionally. Both are true simultaneously. But the thrust of each book differs, and reading them in that light makes both far more intelligible.

Peter mentions grace no fewer than ten times across his two epistles, and characteristically he speaks of the God of all grace — every kind of grace, grace suited to every circumstance. We will rejoice in his grace in heaven, without doubt. But we especially need his grace for the wilderness. Wilderness grace. That is the recurring note.

Sanctification of the Spirit — Unto Two Things

The sanctification of the Spirit in verse 2 is unto two things, not one: unto the obedience and unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Both are in view, and both are important.

The obedience is the obedience of Jesus Christ. That is the character of Christian obedience — it is His obedience, not our performance of a code. This answers the question about the Christian's rule of life directly. We are not sanctified unto the Ten Commandments as a rule. We are sanctified unto the obedience of Christ. Galatians 6 speaks of the law of Christ and the rule of the new creation. These govern Christian conduct. This point is often obscured by those who want a legal precision to hold onto — they turn to the Ten Commandments because they can sink their teeth into something there. Nine of the commandments (excluding the Sabbath) have corresponding New Testament exhortations, so those nine moral principles are not abolished — they carry over. But the form of governance is different: it is the obedience of Christ, not the Mosaic code. And the Sabbath commandment exposes the system for what it is, because those who insist on the law as the rule of life are forced to transmute the seventh-day

Sabbath into a Sunday Sabbath — a piece of theological alchemy that should have stopped them in their tracks.

The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ in verse 2 is a phrase immediately recognizable to Jewish readers. Sprinkling of blood was the instrument by which things were set apart to God throughout the Old Testament order. Here it points to the application of the blood to the believers themselves. They have been set apart to God by that blood. It is a beautiful completion: God's purpose in election, its execution in sanctification by the Spirit unto Christ's obedience, and the application of the blood sealing their belonging to God. A wonderful circle completed.

Begotten Again — Great Mercy — Living Hope

According to his abundant mercy — Darby renders this great mercy, which is more to the point. Abundant suggests many occasions; great speaks to the measure of it. It is the greatness of the mercy that begot us again. And the measure of that mercy, I suppose, is the measure of the cost.

Begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. Not begotten by the blood, though that would not have been untrue — but begotten by the resurrection, because what is in view is the resurrection state in which Christ is glorified, and the inheritance that corresponds to that state. The living hope is alive precisely because it is anchored in a living, glorified Saviour. It is begotten to something, and it is begotten by something — both matter.

The hope looks to an inheritance. And what is said about that inheritance is threefold. It is incorruptible — nothing can destroy it. It is undefiled — Jewish believers especially would hear the weight of this word, trained as they were in all the external defilements of the Old Testament order that spoke of moral contaminations of every kind. The inheritance has no possibility of defilement

attaching to it whatsoever. And it fadeth not away — if it were a flower, it would wither; but this does not. It is reserved in heaven for you.

That phrase — reserved in heaven for you — touches the subject of the eternal security of the believer directly. The inheritance is kept up there. And what about us down here? Verse 5: kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. The inheritance is reserved for us above; we are reserved below to receive it. The complementary pair of verse 4 and verse 5 answers together. God is reserving the inheritance and reserving the inheritors simultaneously, and He will bring them together at the appointed time.

Kept Through Faith — Salvation in Three Aspects

Kept guarded by the power of God through faith for salvation. Faith here is not an intellectual assent — it is a divine implantation. Ephesians 2:8 makes this explicit: it is the gift of God. This is important because it means that what guards the believer is not their own effort to keep believing but God's own power operating through the faith He Himself has given. The whole structure is divine from beginning to end.

Someone might say: I thought we were already saved. And we are. But salvation in Scripture has three aspects. We have been saved — from the penalty and power of sin, by grace through faith. We are being saved — as the Spirit works in us progressively. And we will be saved — when the body is glorified and the fullness of redemption is applied. It is this third and final aspect that verse 5 is pointing to: salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. John's Gospel characteristically uses the present tense for salvation — now. Paul and Peter often point forward to its final consummation. Both are true; it is a question of which dimension is being looked at.

Ready to be revealed in the last time points not to the rapture but to the revelation of Jesus Christ — His appearing in glory. Verse 13 of the same chapter confirms it: hope for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The rapture is a different matter entirely and is not what Peter is presenting to these saints. The time of manifestation — when faithfulness in the wilderness journey will be publicly displayed — is at the appearing. That is what is in view.

*Begotten again unto a living hope — to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled,
and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*