

### A Description of the Believer's Position in Christ

#### 1 Peter 1:1-5

1 Peter 1:1-5: *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."*

#### Background Notes

The salutation of the epistle of 1 Peter is found in verses 1-2. In 1<sup>st</sup> century letters, the salutation included the names of the author and the recipients of the letter, and the greeting. The apostle Peter was the author of 1 Peter (v1). In a number of verses throughout the epistle, Peter reflected back on events in his life that were recorded in the Gospels and in the book of Acts.

The recipients of the letter were *"the pilgrims of the dispersion."* Who were these folks? These people were primarily Jewish Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (v1). These locations were all provinces of the Roman Empire.

Remember that Jews from these areas (and from all over the Roman Empire) were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). Many of them heard the apostle Peter preach a powerful gospel message, and many of them were saved. Acts 2:9-10 lists the nationalities of those who were saved at the time of Pentecost: *"Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes."* When these brand new believers went home from Jerusalem, they carried the gospel with them. They evangelized the Jews in these areas - and probably some Gentiles as well.

Then persecutions came upon the early Christians in Judea, and they were scattered everywhere throughout the Roman Empire. And everywhere they went, they preached the gospel. Acts 8:3-4: *"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."* As a result of the believers being scattered by persecution, the Christian communities in the areas mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1 grew in numbers.

After Saul was saved and became the great apostle Paul, he visited some of these regions in his missionary travels. He spoke and taught the word of the Lord, and spread the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. So although the recipients of this letter were primarily Jewish believers from these Roman provinces, a number of saved Gentiles would have been included as well.

Peter's Christian greeting is at the end of verse 2: "*Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*" It doesn't get any better than that, does it? To have God's grace and peace multiplied in your life is something money can't buy! It's the greatest blessing that we can receive!

Multiplied grace and peace - that's what the apostle Peter wanted for his readers, and that's what God wants for believers today. Remember – 1 Peter is not just a 1<sup>st</sup> century letter to 1<sup>st</sup> century believers. 1 Peter is also of part of the Bible, and thus the teaching and encouragement is for Christians today as well.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Believers are elect - and sanctified - and sprinkled.

*Verse 2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."*

Notice that ***all three persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation.*** We are elect according to the foreknowledge of ***God the Father.*** We are "sprinkled with the blood of ***Jesus Christ, the Son.***" And we are "sanctified by the ***Holy Spirit.***"

#### *a. We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God.*

The fact that believers are "*elect according to the foreknowledge of God*" is beyond our finite comprehension. Do any of you ***fully*** comprehend this truth? An easy (but faulty) way to try to understand this concept is that in His foreknowledge, God "looked down through the years of time" and saw those who would choose to become believers. He then "elected" us on that basis. But it's not that simple! If that were the case, it would mean that God isn't fully omniscient – in other words, He didn't know what choice we were going to make until after we made it.

But God in His foreknowledge knows everything, thus He already knew what choices we would make. And if He knows, He chose. We did not choose God - He chose us! Furthermore, if God didn't make the first move, would we, as sinners, ever have chosen God? The answer is No! So – although the doctrine of election is not easy, it is a ***wonderful doctrine.*** We believers will praise God for His grace in electing us - forever!

*b. We are sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Sanctification means to that believers are set apart for God's holy use. We were set apart for salvation, and then we were set apart for service. Our responsibility is to obey! Through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, we are **set apart for service and obedience to Jesus Christ.**

*c. We are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.*

This "sprinkling" has nothing to do with baptism. And believers are not literally sprinkled with the literal blood of Christ, as took place during some of the Old Testament sacrifices.

The term "sprinkling" is figurative language appropriated from the Old Testament sacrificial system. It is used here to illustrate the one great sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The point here is that believers come into all the benefits and blessings that flow to us because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shed His blood on the cross for our sins. The benefits of Christ's sacrifice are applied to all believers.

Believers are elect - and sanctified - and sprinkled.

## **2. Believers are born again to a living hope.**

*Verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

Our salvation is not a reward for good works. We were spiritually dead - but through faith in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ we have been born again. We have been made alive – born into a new life in the family of God. And this life will never end. We look forward to living with the Lord - **forever!**

This living hope rests on the solid foundation of the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Because our Lord lives forever, we will live forever as well.

Believers are born again to a living hope.

## **3. Believers have received an eternal inheritance.**

*Verse 4: "To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."*

It's nice to receive an earthly inheritance – in fact, we can thank the Lord if we receive an earthly inheritance! But no earthly inheritance is safe and secure. Investments can quickly lose their value. Earthly wealth can be wasted or lost or stolen. And in the end, earthly inheritances are just that – they're only **earthly**. It's only a matter of time before earthly inheritances will mean nothing. They will "fade away."

But believers have an **eternal inheritance** that won't corrode or spoil or fade away. It can't be lost or stolen. It can't lose its value in any way. And if you're a believer, that inheritance is safely **reserved in heaven for you!**

Our eternal inheritance includes all that we will enjoy in heaven forever! Believers have received an eternal inheritance.

#### 4. Believers are preserved by the power of God.

Verse 5: "*Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"

Our inheritance is preserved in heaven for us, and we are preserved for our inheritance! That's the idea in the word "kept" or "shielded" or "protected." Our salvation and our heavenly inheritance are completely secure – forever!

Even though our salvation is ours by the means of our faith (v5), it does not depend on our faith for its security. **The security of our salvation is based on the infinite power of God!** That's pretty secure, isn't it? Aren't you glad? I am!

If our salvation depended on the strength of our faith, I think we would be in a very unsettled, uncertain condition. We wouldn't be sure if we were saved or not. But our security doesn't depend on the strength of our faith – it's based on the power of God! Believers are preserved by the power of God.

#### Practical Application

##### Let the doctrine of election make you more grateful!

The doctrine of election (v2) is the election of *individuals* - not the election of the *Church*. In the Old Testament, the emphasis of God's election was on a group of people: the Jewish people - the nation of Israel. But in the New Testament, the emphasis of God's election is on individuals – on you and me.

The doctrine of election is difficult to understand. In fact, in some ways it's a disturbing doctrine because it's impossible for our finite minds to completely comprehend it. So we must simply accept it by faith, because it is taught in the Word of God. As 2 Timothy 4:3 says, we must "*endure*" sound doctrine.

But the doctrine of election should be comforting to believers. Think of it. It's only by the amazing grace of God that we are saved. As sinners, headed for hell, we would have never chosen God – but **He chose us!** Forever we will praise the Lord for His pure grace toward us! Let the doctrine of election make you more grateful.