

## God's Gracious Plan

### 1 Peter 1:1-12 Introduction

- The atheistic French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre gives his own vision of hell in a play called No Exit: Two women and a man are all damned to hell, but rather than being thrown into fire and brimstone, they are escorted to a plain non-threatening room. They are, however, sentenced to remain together in that same room forever – unable to sleep – unable to close their eyes.
- All three enter posturing about their past. The man, Garcin, portrays himself as having been a man of strong principles. He was really a serial adulterer who was killed in a train wreck after betraying his colleagues and trying to flee the country during wartime. The women's lives are equally disreputable.
- The guilty secrets of the three personalities all gradually come to light in the mandatory intimacy of the room. All is revealed and nothing can be changed. Sartre's creativity prepares us for his famous line, uttered by Garcin, "Hell is other people." But the actual "moral" of the play is the hopelessly amoral conclusion:
  - "You are – your life, and nothing else."
  - There is no forgiveness and no redemption.
  - No greater good, no higher purpose.
  - You live, you laugh, you suffer and you die.
  - And that's it.
- Peter the Apostle saw things differently.
- A close friend of Jesus, he saw God working through his Master a bold eternal plan.
- Our Creator chose us, knew us beforehand, and prepared a wonderful redemption for us through the death and resurrection of His Son.
- This plan, foretold by the prophets, is even now moving toward completion.
- Therefore, we possess a living joy-filled hope.

**God planned your salvation in eternity past, and is preparing you now for a glorious future – in an inheritance that He has already prepared for you.**

### 1 Peter 1:1-12 Outline

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|------|--------------------------------------|---------|
| I.   | God's gracious plan is for us.       | 1:1-2   |
| II.  | He is fulfilling that plan even now. | 1:3-9   |
| III. | He foretold it through the prophets. | 1:10-12 |

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### God's gracious plan is for us. 1:1-2

- 1:1 Pilgrims (Sojourners) of the Dispersion
- These words imply that we are not in our native country, nor are we here permanently.
- We are like resident aliens in a foreign land.
- We are living in a world where we don't belong.

- 1:1 We may not belong here, but we do belong somewhere.
- Our true citizenship is in heaven where our inheritance is already prepared.
- And ultimately we await a new heavens and a new earth where we will live out eternity in the presence of God.
- That's where we belong.
  - "Christians are transients here, but they have an eternal home. They are aliens by faith, because by faith they are citizens of the city of God. Peter's letter eloquently presents the sure hope of the Christian pilgrim; hope in a salvation already secured in Christ, a present as well as a future possession."
  - Edmund P. Clowney,  
The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross.
- 1:2 Peter shows how all three persons of the Trinity are involved in our redemption – the redemption of the elect.
- God the Father has chosen and foreknown us, which is a great source of comfort.
- The Holy Spirit sets us apart. He transforms us and separates us from the world.
- And Christ died for us, His blood acting as a great decontaminant, sprinkled as in Old Testament ceremonies of covenant and purification.

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**He is fulfilling that plan even now. 1:3-9**

- 1:3 We are born again, not merely by means of a gospel message, but by a gospel fact.
- It is the by the fact of the resurrection.
- When Christ rose He secured our salvation.
- He personally entered that new day foretold by the prophets.
- And, in a sense, He brought us with him.
- 1:3 Pastor Chuck Smith emphasizes:
  - "When you look at the preaching of the early church in the Book of Acts, you see that it centered on the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
  - The first message preached by Peter after Pentecost was a sermon concerning the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:30-32)."
- 1:4 an inheritance If we are ever tempted to envy those whose future seems secure from birth, children of wealthy families who are heirs of great fortunes, we should take heart.
- Peter heard Jesus teach about a better treasure stored in heaven – which is ours right now.
- There are no moths there to eat holes in the clothing, no rust to corrode the crowns, and no thieves breaking in to steal.
- 1:4 Peter describes our inheritance in four ways, telling us what it is not and what it is:
  - Incorruptible – it doesn't rot or decay
  - undefiled – it is pure, unpolluted and unsoiled
  - Unfading – perpetual, it doesn't wear out or lose its brilliance.
  - Reserved in heaven for [us] – it is guarded, attended carefully and held there even now.

- 1:5 Notice the word “who” at the beginning of this verse.
- Not only is our inheritance kept for us; we are likewise kept for our inheritance.
- The encouragement would be small to know that nothing could destroy our heavenly inheritance if we ourselves were vulnerable.
- The same power of God that keeps our inheritance also keeps us.
  
- 1:5 But our inheritance is more than heavenly treasure – or a land, a city, or even a new earth.
- It is all that God will give us together in one huge package.
- It is His salvation.
- And it is ready to be revealed in the last time.
- Though it is already prepared, we still don’t know the half of it.
  
- 1:5 The word “kept” here means “kept under guard,” as in a law-enforcement or military sense.
- God is guarding us until the great day when our salvation will be revealed.
- Similarly, the king of Damascus “guarded” the gates of the city with a garrison of soldiers in order to keep Paul inside. (See 2 Cor. 11:32.)
  
- 1:5 We are kept, however, through faith.
- God keeps his finished salvation for us, and us for his salvation.
- But he does not keep us under lock and key, or keep us against our will, which is where that comparison with Paul in Damascus falls short.
- There is our part and God’s part, but let’s face it squarely, it’s mostly about God’s part.
  - “God who works for us also works in us. Our faith is his way of keeping us ...
  - Why does God use faith as the instrument of his keeping power?
  - Because faith is not our achievement, but trust in God’s achievement; ‘your faith and hope are in God’ (1:21).”
  - Edmund P. Clowney,
  
- 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice. The Greek would allow for this to be translated “in whom you greatly rejoice,” meaning in Jesus.
- Peter is talking about Him throughout 1:6-8.
- So Peter may be thinking, not just of all the blessings we have in Christ, but of Christ in whom we have the blessings.
- Either way, we clearly have reason for great rejoicing.
  
- 1:6 In the midst of all that rejoicing, we may suffer, so there are three serious facts to hold onto about our suffering:
  - Now: It is only for the present, not for eternity.
  - For a little while: It is brief and temporary.
  - If need be: It is in some sense necessary.
  - Without those details, our joy would be seriously hindered.
  
- 1:7 Remember that gold does not burn.
- Fire cannot and will not destroy it. Instead, fire helps to remove any impurities.
- So it is with our faith. It is tested by trials and suffering and thereby made pure.

- True Christian faith will not be destroyed by any amount of difficulty or persecution.
- God is using trials to prepare us for an eternity of service to Him.
- 1:8-9 Unlike Peter, but exactly like this letter's first readers, we are not eyewitnesses to the ministry, miracles, sufferings or resurrection of Christ.
- But we can love Him just as they did, because once we exercise our faith, we enter into a first-hand experience with Christ Himself.
- And the consequent inward presence of the Holy Spirit can be a source of excessive joy.
- 1:8-9 About this joy:
  - "It is ... joy that results from being in the presence of God himself, and joy that even now partakes of the character of heaven. It is the joy of heaven before heaven, experienced now in fellowship with the unseen Christ."
  - Wayne Grudem
- 1:8-9 Reality check:
  - When we closely consider the joy that we actually have in Jesus, does this verse sound very much like us?
  - I would say that I have some very real joy in knowing Jesus Christ.
  - At times I would even say that I have "considerable joy" in knowing Jesus Christ.
- 1:8-9 It is rare that I can honestly say that I have "joy inexpressible and full of glory."
- But the verb form "you rejoice" can be translated as an imperative: "Rejoice!"
- So I'm faced with some options:
  - I can say that Peter is wrong or that God is not coming through on His promises. Or, I can say that I need to meditate more on Jesus and learn to more fully rejoice in Him.

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#### 1 Peter 1:1-12 Outline

- I. God's gracious plan is for us. 1:1-2
- II. He is fulfilling that plan even now. 1:3-9

#### **He foretold it through the prophets. 1:10-12**

- 1:10-12 The prophets, though they spoke of things that are now past or which we right now experience, couldn't fully grasp the reality about which they wrote.
- But the Spirit of Christ was moving upon them, causing them to write things they didn't fully understand.
- They knew they were ministering to future generations – to Peter's time and ours.
- 1:10-12 The basic content of the gospel message was expressed in earlier prophecies.
- It is all now preached as a single coherent message about the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Peter made this same point in his sermon on the day of Pentecost.
  - See Acts 2:14-40.
- 1:10-12 things which angels desire to look into
- This is present tense. The angels are still fascinated.

- They didn't wonder about these things only until Christ came - nor was their desire fulfilled once the gospel was clearly announced at Pentecost.
- Angels even now desire a clearer glimpse into the wonders of what God is doing in and through us.
- The world may deem Christians insignificant.
- We may be pitied.
- We may even be looked down upon as fools.
- Angels see things differently.
- To them, believers in Jesus are a perpetual source of holy wonder as the focus of God's attention, great grace and love.
- 1:10-12 History Lesson: A heretical teacher named Marcion appeared in Rome in the second century. He generally disagreed with the kind of thing that Peter is saying here – in fact he rejected this letter whole letter. Specifically, his error was in believing that the Hebrew God was a tyrant to be replaced by the Christian God of love.
- 1:10-12 Many more people since Marcion, perhaps without actually teaching others, have still missed what Peter is teaching here. Both Testaments are inspired by the Holy Spirit, who is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Both Testaments bear witness to Christ. Both Testaments point us to Christ.
- 1:10-12 Our New Testament grows naturally out of Old Testament roots. The Torah, the Prophets and the Writings all bear witness to promises fulfilled in Jesus. Though Peter is writing to a largely Gentile church, he is pointing them back to his own familiar Jewish or Hebrew Scriptures, reminding his readers that in them they find the truth about Jesus.

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### **1 Peter 1:1-12 Conclusions**

- Life without God must inevitably become a life without meaning.
- Without God, we would have to agree with Sartre, the philosopher/playwright.
- “You are – your life, and nothing else.”
- In a godless universe, we're all astronauts who have coincidentally landed on the same rock flying through space – with no way off.
- We can simply survive – until we die.
- Unlike Sartre's worldview that saw nothing but a pointless life, Peter has presented us a life with direction, purpose and meaning.
- We are in the midst of a glorious gracious plan that God has prepared and has been in the process of implementing for longer than our minds are created to handle.
- You and I each have major parts in that plan.

- Don't allow yourself to ever think your life is meaningless, because to do so is:
  - To insult God, who is busy doing something truly incredible – even now.
  - To miss out on what He is doing, which is intended for our good and will ultimately prove to be glorious if we hold on, take heart and persevere.
  
- Inexpressible glorious joy should be our actual Christian experience.
- If we would only quiet our hearts and focus our minds on the things that we should, I'm convinced we'll find that Peter is right and that God is faithful.
- We will greatly rejoice.
  
- In so doing, we can focus on several things that Peter mentions here:
  - God's grace, peace and wonderfully gracious plan
  - Christ's death and resurrection
  - The fact that God is refining and purifying our faith through various trials
  - The glorious inheritance we have in Jesus
  - The reality of Jesus Christ as presented in the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments.
  
- Concluding Scripture passage:
  - Romans 15:4-6

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