

The People of the Way

Sunday, November 7th, 1990

1 Peter 1: 1-8

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 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. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 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: 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.

There is a phrase that is used over and over again in the Book of Acts to describe people who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. This phrase that is used over and over again throughout the Book of Acts is: "The People of the Way." Let me read you a few passages.

First of all, in the 19th Chapter of Acts, in verse 9, it says; "*They spake evil of that way.*" In verse 23 of that same Chapter, it says, "*There arose no small stir about that way.*" Paul said in Acts 22:4, "*I persecuted that way unto death.*" Paul said, "*I persecuted that way.*"

Again, when Paul met God on the road to Damascus, the scripture says, He was on a mission to arrest the people "*of that way.*" Everybody that he could find of "*that way;*" he was to arrest them. In other words, it says, "*And Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the High Priest and secured letters. That if he found any of **that way**, men or women, he was to bring them bound to prison.*" The people of "*that way.*"

My intention today is to describe these people, these people of that peculiar and strange way. The apostle Peter deals with it the best of anyone that I can find in the scripture. He describes the people of "*that way.*" He says in Chapter Two: "*They are a chosen generation.*" He says, "*They are a Holy nation.*" He says, "*They are a peculiar and special people.*" He says, "*They are people who have been called out of darkness into*

light.” He says, *“They are the people of God.”* He says, *“They are a people who have obtained mercy of the Lord.”*

He says all this in Chapter Two, *“They are a chosen generation, they are a Holy nation, a peculiar people, and called out of darkness into God’s light.”* But, I want us to also look in Chapter One of First Peter, I want us to look at several verses that are so plain in describing the people of *“that way.”* These are the people of God, and the people who believe on Christ.

I’m going to go right down the line with verses 1, 2, 3, and 4, right down to verses 8 and 9. I’m going to show you this description that Peter gives of the people of *“that way.”* These people were so despised back in the days of the apostles. These were a people who were persecuted. This is how Peter describes them.

The Book of First Peter it is called a “general epistle.” Now, the reason it is called a “general epistle” is because it is not addressed to any particular church or person. This general epistle is addressed to all believers in general, and the apostle Simon Peter writes it. This is said to be the oldest epistle in the New Testament. I don’t know that for a fact but they do say that it is the oldest epistle in the New Testament.

The title of this message will be: *“The People of the Way.”* The apostle Peter describes the people of *“that way,”* the people of God. They are the believers who love Christ and look to Christ. Peter says in verse 1: *“They are strangers.”* Here is what he says; take a look at it. *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*

Why does he call them strangers? Why does he call the people of God, strangers? Well, they are not strangers to the Lord Jesus Christ, are they? Our Lord said, *“I know My sheep, am known of mine. I call them by name. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them I must bring and they shall be one fold and one shepherd.”* Christ knows His people. They are not strangers to Him.

Then, they are not strangers to the angels. Our Lord, when He is talking about His little ones, His believers, He says, *“Except you be converted and become as a little child, you shall in no wise, enter the kingdom of heaven.”* So, He calls us little ones. He says, *“The angels of these little ones always appear in heaven before the Father on their behalf.”*

These angels are guardian angels. In Hebrews 1:14, it says, *“These angels are ministering spirits. They are sent to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation.”* So, they are not strangers to the angels and they are not strangers to the heavenly host.

They are not strangers to the Heavenly Father and they are not strangers to one another. They are one body, and one family. *“He’s the vine and we’re the branch.”* He’s the head and we are the body. Christ said, *“Who is My mother and who are My brothers and sisters, these who do the will of God? The same are as my mother, brothers and sisters.”* They are not strangers to one another because they are one family in the Lord and one body.

Well, why does Peter call them strangers? I know why they are strangers in this world; they are people who love Christ, who believe Christ, and people who love the gospel of God’s grace. They give God the glory, the honor and the praise. They are strangers to this world. They are strangers in the world and to the world. Listen to what the Lord says; *“Marvel not My brethren if the world hate you; it hated Me before it hated you.”* He said, *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. You’re not of this world; I have chosen you out of this world, therefore, the world hateth you.”*

In fact, our Lord said, *“A man’s enemies and foes may be those of His own household.”* He may be despised in his own house, in his own community, in his own neighborhood, and the place where he works. This is just a fact; true believers need not to expect the friendship of this world, because this world is not the friend of God. True believers need not expect the love of this world because this world does not love God and does not love Christ. So, that is the first way that the apostle describes the people of *“this way.”* He says that they are strangers in the world and to the world. They are despised and hated by the world.

Look at Chapter One verse 2: Peter calls the people of *“the way,”* the elect. He says that they are the elect of God. *“Peter, to the strangers scattered throughout these various places, elect according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.”*

Our Lord said to His disciples, *“You didn’t choose Me, I chose you. We love Him because He first loved us.”* We choose Christ, but only because He chose us. David, writing in the 65th Psalm, said; *“Blessed, and happy is that man whom the Lord chooseth and causeth to approach unto Him.”* Yes, He chose us. God chose us in Christ. *“He chose us before the foundation of the world.”* He chose us, not because we are holy, but that we should be holy. He chose us according to the good pleasure of His own will.

Like Noah of old, every believer has found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Like Abraham of old, whom God called out of his father’s house, out of the land of idolatry, out of Ur the Chaldees, God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Like Jacob of old, of whom God said, *“Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated.”*

God has loved us and has set His love upon us. *“Herein is love, not that we loved God; He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation (a mercy seat) for our sin.”* Like David; He was anointed of God. We have been anointed, chosen, ordained and elected by God Almighty to salvation. They are the elect of God. The people of *“this way”* are strangers. They are strangers to the world. They are in an unfriendly, hostile world; but they are God’s elect. He knows them and set His love upon them from eternity. He said, *“I have drawn you with an everlasting love.”*

Thirdly, look at verse 3: Peter says these people of *“the way”* are born again. Let’s look at it again and read it; *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a living hope.”*

What does these words, *“begotten us again”* mean? Well, the word begotten means to be born. He has begotten us; we are born of God. We are born the first time of our natural parents. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”* From our natural parents, we are born the first time and we receive fleshly life. Like all the sons of Adam, we are born in sin, shapened in iniquity, conceived in sin, brought forth speaking lies and are under the curse and condemnation of the law.

That is how every human being is born into this world. The scripture says, *“They are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”* That is how we are born the first time. We are born without God, without hope, without help and without Christ in this world. *“We are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, the kingdom of God.”*

Now then, the *“people of the way”* have been born again, the second time. They are born this time, of the Spirit of God. They are born the first time of natural parents and born the second time of God. They are born the first time, fleshly, and born the second time, spiritual. We have received spiritual life.

Look at that verse 3 again: It says, *“He hath begotten us.”* Who? The answer is God. God hath begotten us. We are born of God. *“Not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but born of God. He hath begotten us again.”* That is, we are born the second time. We are born spiritually and we are born from above. We are born of the Word of God and by the Spirit of God. We are *“born again”* and it is a new birth.

“He hath begotten us again to a living hope.” Now, when we are born of our parents the first time, the average age is around 72 for death. The flesh is going to die. The flesh

will go back to the dust from whence it came. *“Dust though art to dust thou shall return.”* When our parents give us birth and when we come into this world born of our mothers, our one objective is the grave. This is where our flesh is headed, the grave.

“But, God hath begotten us unto a living hope.” When we are born the second time of the Spirit of God and born again, we are not born to die. Christ said, *“He that believeth on Me shall never die. I am the resurrection and the life. I’m come that they might have life more abundantly.”* Do you see that?

The people of *“the way”* are strangers to this world. They are the elect of God. *“They are elect according to the foreordination of God and born again unto a living hope. He hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* The fact that our hope is a living hope is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, the Son of God.

Then, in verse 4: Peter says, *“The people of the way are rich people.”* Look at it; *“He hath begotten us again unto a living hope and unto an inheritance.”* Everybody knows what an inheritance is. We have an inheritance and it is not like an inheritance that is here on this earth. Someone may die and leave you a house, a car or some money. After awhile that is all gone. This inheritance is incorruptible. This inheritance is not of the earth, it is heavenly blessings.

This inheritance is undefiled and is untouched by sin; *“It fadeth not away.”* This inheritance is reserved. Have you ever called ahead at a restaurant to reserve a table? They reserve the table and they put a sign on it saying reserved with your name on it. You may be in another part of town. That table is down here at the restaurant on Main St. This reservation is going to sit there and wait on you until you get there and occupy that place. That is what God is saying. There is an inheritance waiting on these strangers, these elect, these born-again people of God.

You know, some of God’s people on this earth have plenty. Others have little and are in poverty. Some of God’s people on earth have a comfortable living and some do not. I have some friends in Mexico, Africa and other places; they are very poor. They don’t have hardly anything. Some of God’s people on this earth prosper and some do not. All of them don’t prosper.

I will tell you this; all of them that are in Christ, are rich! *“There is an inheritance, reserved in heaven.”* In Christ Jesus the Lord, every believer has a glorious future. They will have a glorious future when this life is over. John wrote about it in Revelation 21: He said, *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and He shall dwell with them and*

they shall be His people. God shall wipe all tears from their eyes and there will be no more death. There will be no more sorrow, there will be no more crying, for the former things are all past away. Behold, I make all things new."

My friends; don't put too much confidence in this life and the things of this life. Don't put too much emphasis on the things of this earth, its luxuries, entertainment and its possessions. *"Having food and clothing, therewith, let us be content."* Why should we be content? *"We have an inheritance."*

Our testator, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His blessed will and covenant has left us an inheritance. *"We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ."* While you may not have a great deal here, it really doesn't matter. If you have enough to eat, enough clothes to wear and a place to sleep, then we should be thankful.

Paul said, *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am to be content."* God's people are rich people. They may not be now, but *"They have an inheritance reserved in heaven, incorruptible, undefiled and fadeth not away."* Their names are already on the table, waiting for you to occupy it.

All right, verse 5: Here is the fifth thing, Peter says, "The people of "the way" are a kept people. They are (k-e-p-t) people. The scripture says, *"We are kept by the power of God through faith."* Christ said, *"I give unto My sheep eternal life; they will never perish."* Paul said in Romans, *"Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Who is he that condemneth? Christ has died. Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"*

He said in Philippians, *"He that hath begun a good work in you shall perform it, (shall perfect it, shall complete finish it), in the day of Christ."* Christ said, *"All that My Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."* Jude wrote, *"Unto Him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us holy, unblameable, before His glorious presence."* We are a kept people.

Now then, listen to me; I know that "people of the way" believers, who come to Christ, will keep coming to Christ. They will continue to believe on Christ. They will continue in the faith. They will keep on walking with the King. They will persevere.

Let me tell you something; our strength is not in ourselves, but in Him. We don't keep ourselves. We don't hold His hand; He holds ours. That is what that says there, *"Who are kept."* These are the elect strangers. These are those born-again people. These heirs of God are kept by the power of God. That's right! He says, *"I'll never leave you or*

forsake you.” You’ll never leave Him either. You will never leave Him because He will never leave you.

He says, “I’ll never forsake them, and they will not forsake me.” I will tell you this; you will not forsake Him because He won’t forsake you. He’s the one who keeps us. He said, *“I am the Lord; I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”* In Romans 11:29 it says, *“The gifts of God are without change and without repentance.”* We are a kept people. God is going to keep His people. *“All that My Father giveth Me shall come to Me and Him that cometh to Me, I shall in no wise cast out. I came down from heaven not to do My will but the will of Him that sent Me. This is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I will lose nothing, but raise him up at the last day.”*

All right, verses 6 and 7: Now, there is something else about these people. They are the elect and they are strangers. They are begotten again and born again. They are rich and they are kept people. They are kept in His hand and He will not let us go. These people are a tried people. Listen to me; their way on earth is not easy, it is difficult. In verse 6 it says, *“You rejoice in Christ.”* You rejoice in that inheritance, and you rejoice in His grace.

“Now, for a season, you are in heaviness, through many trials and many temptations.” Do you know anything about heaviness? Why? *“That the trial of your faith.”* That is what is going on; God is trying your faith. God is proving your faith and God is strengthening your faith. *“That the trial of your faith.”* That faith is much more precious than gold and gold is tried in a fire.

In other words, when a man wants to purify gold and melt off all the dross and impurities, he puts it in a fire. He knows how hot to make the fire. The owner of the gold is never very far away from the furnace. He puts it in the fire and he knows when to take it out. That is what He is saying here; *“Your faith, the trial of your faith, is much more precious to God than that gold is to the owner. Though it be tried with fire, that your faith might be tried also and might be found unto the praise and honor and glory of Almighty God at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Now, believers are the people of God and have a glorious future with Christ. But, on this earth, as I said, their way is not easy. They are subject to many trials, many sorrows and many heartaches. Our Lord said that, *“In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* I have defeated the world; and I have conquered the world. *“All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer.”* That is what the scripture says.

If you be without chastisement, you're not sons and you're not sons of God. *"Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth."* These trials through which we are going through are ordained of our Father.

I hear preacher's talking about all the trouble that you have and that it is caused by Satan. Not if you are a child of God. Satan can't touch you without God's permission. He can't touch a child of God unless God permits him to. The Father ordains our trials. Our trials are for our good. All things are for our good. Our trials will strengthen our faith. Our trials will produce patience. These trials refine our faith and bring glory to our God.

Last of all, in verse 8: The people of *"the way"* love Christ. That's right! They believe Christ and rejoice in Christ. *"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."* We have not seen with the natural eye, but with the eye of faith.

There are three words which describe a believer's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the three words that Paul gave in First Corinthians 13: *"Faith, hope and love."* That is the very three words He uses right here. Look at verse 8 again: *"Whom having not seen, you love. And though you see Him not, you believe."* That is faith! *"You rejoice with joy unspeakable."* That is a good hope, faith, hope and love. We have Christ. We believe Him, we love Him and we rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable.

I was preaching down in Mexico a few months ago, last winter, and there was a chief cowboy down on a ranch that had been listening to the missionary for a long time. I went down there and preached and the missionary translated. This cowboy's name is Fidel. He came to the knowledge of Christ. He believed the gospel and the missionary baptized him. He had been listening a long time. God revealed the gospel to his heart.

He quit going to the Alcoholic's Anonymous meetings. He had always gone to those. He had been bad to drink. He quit going and one of the ladies came to him and said, "Fidel, you're not coming to the Alcoholic's Anonymous meetings anymore; you have missed several weeks." He said, "I don't need it anymore." She said, "What do you mean you don't need it anymore?" He said, "I don't need it anymore; I have Christ and I don't need AA.

I will tell you this; when you have Christ you have all you need. For in Him we have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. *"Whom having not seen, we love, believe, and rejoice with joy unspeakable."*

